THE ENGLISH NATION

INDUSTRIAL AND SOCIAL HISTORY

BY

P. MEADOWS, M.A.(LOND.)

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HISTORICAL COURSE FOR MIDDLE FORMS

BY

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AND

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GENERAL PREFACE

As a result of many years' experience in teaching History, we have reached certain conclusions upon which we base our reasons for the publication of this Historical Course.

In the first place, we are unable to find any adequate justification for the traditional method of regarding History as a series of reigns. The central fact of History is development, and it appears to us that the somewhat limited time which is usually available for the study of this subject might be much more usefully spent than in the acquisition of details concerning the characters of kings and queens, their quarrels and amusements, their wars and battles, except in so far as these facts actually bear on the course of history. It would be idle to deny or ignore the influence which monarchs and statesmen have exercised on national progress, but it is unfair to allow boys and girls to leave school with the impression that History is little more than a collection of military achievements and political complications. There are two aspects of our national story which deserve particular and separate treatment, because of their intimate connection with our common lives and

modern problems, and because of the desirability of obtaining a clear knowledge and coherent grasp of the continuity of their development. These are the industrial and the constitutional sides of our history; and in this Course we devote to each of them a separate volume. Further, as we believe that some knowledge of foreign history is both desirable and necessary, we have introduced the series by an outline of the history of Europe.

We have frankly adopted the attitude that the detailed study of periods should be postponed till the age of sixteen or thereabouts. We find, personally, that with younger pupils anything like an exhaustive treatment is apt to degenerate into a lifeless, mechanical, memory-taxing process; very little is permanently retained, and the subject thus treated has small educational value.

Moreover, we feel convinced that an intelligent comprehension of the main movements and lines of development is all that one can reasonably expect from the middle-form boy or girl.

The value of original sources is by this time fairly well established. We have appended to every chapter passages from contemporary writings, not only to lend vividness and reality to the narrative, but also to form the basis for the treatment of questions, the answering of which will demand something more than mere effort of memory. We have found this plan, which is explained by Mr. Keatinge in his valuable *Studies in the Teaching of History*, to produce admirable results.

We sincerely hope that practical teachers will appreciate the distinctive features of this course;

(1) the plan for providing for the four years of middle-school life between the ages of twelve and sixteen; (2) the careful adaptation of each volume to a year's school work; (3) the combination of outlines and passages from original sources; (4) the separate treatment of the important aspects of national history; and (5) the employment of questions which will necessitate on the part of the pupil reasonable exercise of comparison and judgment.

We might add that while Dr. Henderson has prepared the first and fourth volumes, and Mr. Meadows the second and third, we have collaborated throughout in determining the plan and scope and general arrangement of the Course.

B. L. K. H.

P. M.

PREFACE TO VOLUME TWO

I HAVE tried in this volume to give a clear and straightforward account of the development of the English nation in those respects which most closely concern the common life of the people. The value and importance of the industrial and social aspect of our history is becoming more and more recognised, and there seems to be every reason why it should take its place as a definite subject of class instruction. For my own part, I have found that this particular branch of history is not only followed with eagerness and interest, but is keenly appreciated and intelligently understood by boys of thirteen and fourteen.

I gratefully acknowledge permission to reprint several of the extracts from contemporary writings which form part of this book: I am indebted to Messrs. Hutchinson for the passages from the life of Joseph Arch; to the American Academy of Political Science for the Extent of the Borley Manor; to the Clarendon Press for the Reading and Lynn Ordinances from Gross's *Gild Merchant*; to Mr. John Murray for the extract from Sir E. Clarke's *Jocelin of Brakelond*; to Mr. Sidney Webb for the passage from *Problems of Modern Industry*; to

the Cambridge University Press for the extracts from the *Discourse of the Commonweal*; and to the Royal Historical Society for the portions taken from *Walter of Henley*.

P. M.

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THE ENGLISH NATION:

INDUSTRIAL AND SOCIAL HISTORY

PART I

CHAPTER I

BEFORE THE CONQUEST

WHEN the Romans invaded our island they found the country inhabited by tribes of Britons, each under the rule of a tribal king. There was no national unity, and at the time of the first visit of the Romans, one Celtic king was endeavouring to make himself supreme over the others. It appears that below the kings there were two classes of people, the lower one being composed chiefly of the descendants of the Iberians, the earliest settlers in Britain.

The Britons lived, generally, in a very primitive fashion, but their standard of civilisation continually improved, more especially in the south, by reason of their increasing communication with Gaul. Foreign merchants visited these shores in search of gold, iron, and especially tin, for which Britain had been famous from the earliest times.

The Romans put an end to the warfare between the tribes by subjecting the whole country, as far as they could, to a central government. Although

their chief object was to benefit themselves, Britain derived many advantages from their occupation of the country. They developed the natural resources of the land, and large quantities of corn, as well as lead, tin, and slaves, were exported under their direction. For the purpose of this development, and to render more effective their control over the country, splendid roads and bridges were constructed. Towns grew round the military garrisons at Chester, York, Colchester, Lincoln, London, and other places.

Thus we see that under Roman rule Britain enjoyed the benefits of peace and prospered well; but it seems probable that the new civilisation rendered the Britons unwarlike and unable to defend themselves against the foes who threatened them when the Roman power began to decline towards the end of the fourth century. Teutonic tribes, including the Angles and Saxons, invaded the country from the Continent and occupied it in several separate kingdoms which finally combined into one. This process lasted between four and five centuries; during this time there was continuous warfare between the various kingdoms, and this unsettled condition naturally prevented trade and industry from flourishing. The invading tribes appear to have been quite accustomed to maritime enterprise, but after their settlement in Britain they were but little interested in any activity on the sea, and foreign trade was neglected. From the time of King Alfred, who died in 901, better progress was made in this respect; the rank of thane might be granted to a merchant who had thrice crossed

the sea; Alfred himself had improved the navy, and this must have meant an increase in the number of vessels available for merchant traffic; and there is evidence that the slave trade was still of considerable importance.

But the Early English were not a commercial people. Their trade was small and their manufactures were few and unimportant. The industries were not numerous; fishing and salt-making were carried on to some extent, and they were the industries next in importance to agriculture, in which almost the whole of the population was engaged. The social condition of early England depends, then, very largely upon the methods of holding and cultivating the land, and we must try to understand these.

The Early English people lived in separate communities, in villages or small towns, and each of these communities was to a large extent self-supporting and independent of the others, subsisting on its own produce as far as possible, and taking advantage of local markets and fairs for the procuring of necessaries which could not be produced by the community itself. The method in which the village community was originally organised is not certain; some think that a "mark system" was in force among the tribes before they settled in Britain, and that this system was introduced here in some form. If this were the case, the village would contain groups of families connected by ties of kindred; there would be common pasture ground and common waste ground available for all the villagers; the arable land would be divided generally into three

fields, one sown with corn, one with a spring crop, and one lying fallow; each of these fields would be divided into strips, one or more for each man, and would be cultivated by a common team of oxen. The chief features of this system, if it ever existed at all, were the common possession of the land and the democratic government of the community which held it. There was no individual ownership, and no free man was dependent on another in any way.

But it is not likely that this condition of things ever existed in England. From the earliest times we find individuals holding the possession of land, and a growing tendency for the weaker landowners to become dependent upon the stronger ones. We find the kings making grants of land to their friends, and thus helping to establish a system in which definite class-distinctions appear. The typical Old English village would probably contain a thane, or landlord, living on his own land and owing some services to the king; some free farmers, or yeomen, farming their own land and helping to work the land of the thane; peasants, who were not free and had to perform task work in return for a small holding; and labourers, who had to undertake the menial work and were serfs, bound to the soil without any privileges. The labourers and peasants may have been partly of Celtic origin. These classes, with a few tradesmen and craftsmen, probably constituted the population of a village community.

As England became consolidated under the rule of a single king the greater landlords obtained more power, and gradually the "manorial system"

was developed. We shall consider this in the next chapter.

From the COLLOQUIUM OF AELFRIC (about 1000 A.D.)

[The ploughman says:] O my lord, I work hard; I go out at daybreak, driving the oxen to the field, and I yoke them to the plough: be the winter never so stark I dare not remain at home for fear of my lord; but having yoked the oxen and fastened share and coulter, each day I must plough a full acre or more. . . . I have a boy driving the oxen with a goad, and he is hoarse with the cold and shouting. . . . I do more than this. I have to fill the bins of the oxen with hay, and water them, and take out their litter. . . . It is hard labour, because I am not free.

[The shepherd says.] I also have work; in the morning I drive my sheep to their pasture, and stand over them, in heat and cold, with the dogs, lest wolves devour them, and I lead them back to their folds and milk them twice a day, and move their folds, and I make cheese and butter, and I am faithful to my lord.

[The ox-herd says:] O my lord, I work much; when the ploughman unyokes his oxen I lead them to pasture, and all the night I stand over them watching for thieves; and again early in the morning I take them to the ploughman, well fed and watered.

[The hunter says:] I weave nets for myself, and set them in suitable places, and set my hounds to follow the wild game, till they come unawares to the nets and are caught there; and I slay them in the nets. I can also hunt without nets. With swift dogs I hunt down wild game; I take harts and boars and bucks and does, and sometimes hares. . . . I give the king whatever I take, because I am his hunter. He clothes and feeds me well and sometimes gives me a horse or a bracelet, so that I may exercise my craft more willingly.

[The fisherman says:] . . . I go on my boat, and cast my net in the river and cast my hook and bait, and I take whatever they catch. I throw away the unclean fish and take the clean for food. . . . I sell my fish in

the city. I cannot catch as many as I can sell. I catch eels and pike, trout and lampreys, and whatever fish swim in the stream. Sometimes I fish in the sea, but not often, for it is a long voyage for me to the sea. It is a dangerous thing to catch a whale. It is safer for me to go to the river with my boat than to go with many boats hunting whales, because I prefer to catch fish that I can kill rather than that I and my companions should be sunk and drowned by one blow.

[The fowler says :] In many ways I deceive birds; sometimes with nets, with snares, with lime, by whistling, with a hawk, with traps. . . . My hawks feed themselves and me in winter, and in spring I let them fly away to the woods, and I catch young birds in harvest and tame them. . . .

[The merchant says :] I go on my ship with my wares and row over the sea, and sell my things and buy precious things which are not produced in this land, and I bring them here to you with great danger. . . . I bring purple and silk, precious stones and gold, various clothes and pigments, wine and oil, ivory and brass, copper and tin, sulphur and glass, and such things. . . . I wish to sell them here dearer than I bought them there, so that I may get profit whereby to feed myself, my wife, and son.

[The salt-maker, the baker, and the cook follow.]

[The smith says :] Whence would the ploughman get his share or coulter or his goad if it were not for my craft ? Whence would the fisher have his hook, the shoemaker his awl, or the tailor his needle ?

[The wood-wright says :] Which of you does not use my craft, since I make for you all houses and various vessels and ships ?

From the RECTITUDINES SINGULARUM PERSONARUM (*Services due from various persons*) (10th century)

The thane's law is that he . . . do three things for his land—military service with the king, help in building fortifications, and maintaining the bridges. Also, from

many lands more services are due at the king's demand, such as deer-hedging at the king's house, and clothes for the guard . . . and many other things.

The geneat's services are various, as they are fixed on the land. On some he must pay rent and a grass-swine every year, and ride and carry and fetch loads, work and support his lord, and reap and mow, cut the deer-hedge and keep it up, and build and hedge the enclosure and make new roads for the village . . . and go errands far or near whenever he is told.

The cottar's services are what are fixed on the land. On some he shall work for his lord each Monday in the year, and three days a week in harvest; on some lands all days in August, and he must mow an acre of oats a day. . . . He need not pay rent. He should have five acres in his holding, more if it is the custom on the land, and if it is less it is too little, because his work is often wanted.

The gebur's services are various, in some places heavy, in some moderate. On some land he must work at week-work two days at such work as he is required through the year every week, and at harvest three days for week-work and from Candlemas to Easter three. If his horse is being used for his lord he need not work while the horse is out. He must pay on Michaelmas day ten pence rent and on Martinmas day twenty-three measures of barley and two hens; at Easter a young sheep or two pence. . . . From the time that they first plough to Martinmas he shall each week plough one acre, and prepare himself the seed in his lord's barn. Also three acres corn work and two of grass ploughing; if he needs more grass then he ploughs for it as he is allowed. . . . Each farmer gives six loaves to the swine-herd when he drives his herd to mart. On the land where this custom holds the small farmer must have, for stocking his land, two oxen and one cow and six sheep and seven acres sown on his yardland. But after that year he must perform all services which pertain to him. . . . On some lands the gebur shall pay honey-rent, on some meat-rent, on some ale-rent.

1. *What do you gather from Aelfric's Dialogue as to the nature of imports in his time? How do they compare with those of the present day?*

2. *Discuss the services rendered by the lower ranks of society, and give your opinion of the system generally.*

3. *What are the chief differences between the occupations of the people in early England and those of modern times?*

CHAPTER II

THE MANORIAL SYSTEM

IN the year 1085 King William commanded that a Survey of England should be made, in order to ascertain the extent of the resources of his kingdom. He sent officers into all parts, with instructions to collect full particulars of every estate. The *Domesday Book*, as that Survey was called, gives us a great mass of information which is very useful indeed in helping us to understand the social conditions of the period.

We find that the country was already divided into manors, and most of these were assigned by the king to his Norman friends. Thus the first effect of the Conquest, as far as the English people were concerned, was a change in the ownership of the land. The relations between the lord of the manor and its inhabitants remained practically the same as before. It is important to note that no new method of land-holding was suddenly introduced. As we have pointed out, there had been a gradual change; the more important landowners in the different villages or townships had obtained power and rights over their weaker brethren; probably by offering them protection in return for services; and thus the "lord of the manor" had established himself as a

permanent institution, and all the inferior classes were to some extent dependent upon him. The lords began by being the protectors of those around them, and ended by being their masters.

The Norman Conqueror took this manorial system as he found it; but foreigners replaced Englishmen in all the important places. Earls, bishops, abbots, landlords—all these were Normans, and the new masters proved to be better managers and organisers than the old. The whole arrangement of government was solidified and strengthened; the new lords had to make a bargain with the king as to the terms on which they held the land and the services they had to render for it; and the whole system is known as feudalism. But the Normans did not introduce it into England; it was there already to some extent in some parts of the country. *Society was perhaps not organised in the same way* all over the land, and the Conquest did this work of organisation, guiding everything in the same direction—a feudal system, with the king at the head. The tenants-in-chief held land directly from him and owed him military service in return; sub-tenants *might hold land from tenants-in-chief on the same conditions, and the villeins and other inferior* classes, the mass of the people, rendered services to their superiors.

In order to understand the working of this system it will be useful to examine the arrangements of a Norman manor. The most important building was *the manor-house, which was surrounded by the* demesne, or private land, of the lord. The lord would reside permanently in the manor-house if he owned

only a single manor, but if he possessed several he would move from one to another, leaving bailiffs in charge during his absence. The lord of the manor might be a tenant-in-chief, a sub-tenant, or the king himself. The villagers lived in poor and mean houses, their standard of comfort was very low, and they had to work hard not only on their own holdings but on their lord's land as well. They had to do week-work, that is, to work a number of days every week for their lord, and they must also do for him boon-work, which meant that he claimed their services for a certain number of days at important seasons, such as harvest. These villagers themselves were of various classes: the villeins, who numbered over one-third of the whole population at the time of the Domesday Survey, each held a virgate, or about thirty acres, of land; the cottars, or bordars, held smaller holdings of about five acres each, and did not possess individually the means of ploughing their land, but had to combine for that purpose; there were also some slaves, but this class disappeared soon after the Conquest. In the eastern counties we find yet another class, superior to the villeins, but below the lords; they were socmen, whose services were less burdensome, and who were more independent.

So much for the inhabitants of the manor. The land was usually of three main kinds—arable land, meadow or pasture, and waste and woodland. The arable was divided into two or three fields, and each field was subdivided into separate strips, the object being to obtain some equality of the advantage and disadvantage arising from the variation in

position and fertility of the plots. Part of the lord's demesne was held in strips in these fields. The meadow land might be held in different portions, but the best land, which would be by the side of a river, belonged to the lord, who made a charge for its use. The villagers had the right of pasture on the waste, and of gathering wood and feeding swine on the woodland. Sometimes a restriction was placed upon the number of cattle which were allowed to graze, sometimes no stint was made. After the corn and hay harvests the arable land and the meadows were thrown open for common pasture Some of the more important villagers would have, near their dwellings, small plots of ground belonging to them, which they could work as they pleased.

Briefly to summarise the social conditions of the period we may say, then, that the majority of the people lived in villages, each village being to a large extent self-supporting; the lord of the manor is the head over all, occupying his demesne or visiting it occasionally, the various inferior classes, the socmen and villeins and bordars, render their services, their week and boon-work, ploughing and sowing and reaping, grinding their corn at the village mill, the craftsmen, such as the blacksmith and carpenter, may hold some land in return for their work. This village life was very simple, the lives of the villagers were monotonous and colourless; but while the country was free from disturbance, the people were, on the whole, fairly satisfied, and were, at any rate, about as well off as the agricultural labourers of our own day. In a later chapter we shall show the changes which gradually altered conditions; these

changes were slow in producing effect, and the manorial system continued for some centuries with most of the characteristics which have been described above.

From the ANGLO-SAXON CHRONICLE (1085)

At midwinter the king was at Gloucester with his Witan; and he held his court there five days; and afterwards the archbishop and clergy held a synod during three days; and Maurice was then chosen to the bishopric of London, William to that of Norfolk, and Robert to that of Cheshire; they were all clerks of the king.

After this the king had a great consultation, and spoke very deeply with his Witan concerning the land, how it was held, and what were its tenantry. He then sent his men over all England, into every shire, and caused them to ascertain how many hundred hides of land it contained; and what lands the king possessed therein; what cattle there were in the several counties; and how much revenue he ought to receive yearly from each. He also caused them to write down how much land belonged to his archbishops, to his bishops, his abbots, and his earls, and, that I may be brief, what property every inhabitant of all England possessed in land, or in cattle, and how much money this was worth. So very narrowly did he cause the survey to be made, that there was not a single hide, nor a rood of land, nor—it is shameful to relate that which he thought no shame to do—was there an ox, or a cow, or a pig passed by, and that was not yet down in the accounts; and then all these writings were brought to him.

From DOMESDAY

(Sussex.) The Count of Mortain holds in demesne Eastbourne. King Edward held it. There were and are 46 hides. There is land for 28 ploughs. On the demesne are 4 ploughs, and there are 68 villeins and

3 bordars with 28 ploughs. There is 1 mill yielding 5 shillings, and 16 saltpans yielding 4 pounds and 40 shillings, and 25 acres of meadow. From the pasturage come 6 pounds.

Ralph holds, of William de Warenne, Brighton. Brictric held it by grant of Earl Godwin. In the time of King Edward, as now, it was assessed for 5½ hides. There is land for 3 ploughs. On the demesne is half a plough, and there are 18 villeins and 9 bordars with 3 ploughs and 1 serf. From gafol-rents 4000 herrings.

(Berkshire.) In Reading hundred Miles Crispin holds Pangeborne and William holds it of him. Baldwin held it of King Edward. There are 6 hides and 1 virgate, and they did not pay geld T.R.E. (in King Edward's time); and now they do not pay except as 5 hides. There is nothing in the demesne. Three villeins and 5 bordars (are there) with 2 ploughs and a mill worth 10 shillings, and 12 acres of meadow. Of this land a knight holds 1 hide; and there he has 1 plough and 2 acres of meadow. The whole was worth 6 pounds; afterwards 5 pounds; now 4 pounds.

The same Miles holds Apletune and Richard holds it of him. Halden held it T.R.E. It was then assessed at 5 hides; now at 2½ hides. There is land for 6 ploughs. On the demesne is 1; and there are 4 villeins and 5 bordars with 1 plough. There are 3 serfs and a fishery worth 34 shillings and 2 pence. It was worth 100 shillings; afterwards 70 shillings; now 60 shillings.

(Yorkshire.) In Fenton, Osmund had 3 bovates of land for geld. Land for half a plough. Now the same Osmund has it of Ilbert de Lacy. On the demesne there is 1 plough, and 1 acre of meadow. T.R.E. it was worth 10s.; now 10s.

In Goodmanham, Colgrim and Orm had 2 manors of 3 carucates and 6 bovates for geld, and 3 ploughs can be there. Now Nigel has it of the Count of Mortain. On the demesne there is 1 plough, and 2 villeins with 1 plough, and 1 man rendering 32d. T.R.E. it was worth £4; now 12s.

In Easthorpe, Colgrim had 1 manor of 2 carucates and

6 bovates for geld, and 2 ploughs can be there. Nigel has it, and it is waste. T.R.E. it was worth 30s.

In Middleton, Gamel had 1 manor of 3 carucates, and 2 ploughs can be there. Nigel has it, and it is waste, except 1 man having 3 oxen. T.R.E. it was worth 30s.; now 5s.

(Bedfordshire.) William de Warenne holds in Dean 2 hides, and 3 socmen hold of him. There is land for 3 ploughs, and they are there. There are 5 bordars and 1 serf. It is and was worth 30 shillings T.R.E. and after. This land the same socmen held who hold it now.

In Henlow, Hugh holds of Walter the Fleming 3½ hides. There is land for 3½ ploughs. On the demesne is 1 plough, and there could be another. There are 4 villeins with 2 ploughs, and there are 4 bordars with 2 serfs, meadow sufficient for 3½ plough teams, and 1 mill worth 34 shillings. In all it is worth 60 shillings, was worth when received 40 shillings; T.R.E. 70 shillings. This land 6 socmen held and could assign their land to whom they wished.

1. *What do you infer from the passages from* Domesday *as to the effect of the Conquest on various districts of England?*

2. *How does the position of Englishmen appear to have been affected by the Conquest?*

3. *Explain carefully the value of* Domesday *to the king.*

4. *Draw a plan of a manorial village.*

CHAPTER III

THE TOWNS

THE Angles and Saxons were not fond of town life, and when they invaded Britain they took very little notice of the Roman towns. They destroyed them or allowed them to fall into ruins, and settled in villages, and we have noticed that each village community was, as far as possible, self-supporting; it was to a great extent independent of the outside world, and the villagers themselves supplied most of their simple wants. There were more than fifty towns in Roman Britain, and it does not appear that any of these survived as a centre of social life during the English settlement.

But in time certain forces began to work which encouraged the growth of towns. The introduction of Christianity was one of these, the great monasteries which were established from time to time were partly dependent on exchange of goods with other places, and small towns sprang up under their shadows. At Reading and Canterbury, for instance, the presence of monasteries was a great encouragement to the growth of the towns. Then again the
1. Danes, who invaded England at different times during the ninth and tenth centuries, were more active in trade than the English; and as soon as

their influence began to be felt many towns increased greatly in importance. The Danes were most powerful in the eastern counties, and such towns as Lincoln and Cambridge owe much of their early importance to the Danes.

The towns, then, began to revive in importance under the stimulus given by Christianity and the Danes; many of the deserted Roman towns were once more occupied; many towns, such as Bristol, were established in places convenient for foreign trade. But it was not until the Norman Conquest that the towns became really flourishing. The Conquest itself, indeed, had at first a destructive effect; the towns suffered from the general disturbance and from the erection of castles; but when peace was once established under strong rulers they throve and prospered. The connection of the kings of England with France established a greater intercourse with foreign parts than had 3. previously existed, and the towns grew into centres of business. At first the towns formed part of the demesne of some feudal lord or lords, or of the king himself; in *Domesday* many of the county towns of the present day find a place, but London and Winchester are not included. These were the two most important towns, London being already the largest town and most important centre, while Winchester, which later had a Survey of its own, was the traditional royal city, having been the capital of the Early English kings.

Now, all these towns were originally like the villages in one respect: their inhabitants were under the control of some lord or of the king, and

were obliged to render some services to him. Just as the villagers had to do work for their lord, to grind their corn at his mill, to pay his dues, and obey the decisions of his courts, so the townsfolk had to buy and sell in his markets under similar conditions. They had to make some return in labour or in kind for their holdings or for trading privileges, and their first concern would be to try to substitute money payments instead of goods or labour. We shall see that this practice of substituting cash for labour afterwards became common in the agricultural districts, but the townspeople adopted it very early In this way they obtained a certain amount of independence, but they wanted still more, they desired liberty to look after all their own affairs They had to pay certain taxes to the king, and by the time of the Norman Conquest it had become usual to pay these taxes in the form of a sum of money, for the payment of which the town as a whole was responsible. This fixed tax paid by the whole town was known as the "firma burgi." Soon they obtained the right of determining exactly how this tax should be collected, and of appointing mayors of their own, so that the king's officers, the sheriff, and the bailiff were excluded from interfering with their internal affairs. Then they would strive to set up their own courts of justice, to make their own laws for the government of their towns, and generally to obtain freedom from outside restrictions.

The privileges which a town might thus gain were usually embodied in a charter, which was a document issued by the king or by a noble, asserting

that the town had certain definite rights and liberties which could not be interfered with. A town was usually quite willing to pay down a fairly large sum of money in return for a charter which would set it free from feudal burdens and enable its burgesses to look after their own affairs; and the king and the nobles were often glad of the opportunity to obtain ready money by surrendering these privileges of theirs. Warfare, which was the chief occupation of a noble in those days, was a very expensive thing, and the chance was usually taken of obtaining cash from the most convenient source. The disturbances of Stephen's reign, the Crusades, the incessant fighting in France — all these had to be paid for, and the towns took the best advantage they could by offering to buy charters and concessions, and once having obtained their freedom, they guarded it with the utmost care.

But we must notice that although the burgesses were anxious for this freedom, they cared for it only as it affected themselves alone; each town was a separate unit, just like the manorial village; and strangers from other towns were to an extent foreigners. At the same time more liberty was to be found in a town than in a village, and in some cases villeins from the country might acquire freedom by remaining in a town for a year and a day without being claimed by their lord. But this freedom for a townsman did not mean permission to be enterprising and to work independently of other merchants and craftsmen, or to compete with them; strict rules governed the prices of goods

and nobody thought at that time of working apart from the general body. These regulations which governed industry were made with a view to encouraging and fostering it, and we shall shortly consider their nature and effect.

So we see that while the nobles were indulging their desire for military glory, while the romantic and picturesque chivalry of that age was being established, while kings and princes were quarrelling and fighting at home and abroad, the towns of England were slowly and surely laying a foundation of solid progress, for which the knights and barons cared nothing, but which was really one of the most important features of the life of the growing English nation.

From DOMESDAY (1086 A.D.)

(Bury St. Edmunds) In the town where rests enshrined St. Edmund, King and Martyr of glorious memory, Abbot Baldwin held, T.R.E., towards the provision of the monks 118 men; and they could give and sell their land; and under them 52 bordars from whom the Abbot can have some little aid, 54 freemen poor enough, 43 almsmen; each of them has 1 bordar. Now there are 2 mills and 2 stews or fish-ponds. . . . Now the town is contained in a greater circle, including land which then used to be ploughed and sown; wherever there are 30 priests, deacons, and clerks together; 28 nuns and poor persons who daily utter prayers for the King and for all Christian people; 80 less five bakers, ale brewers, tailors, washerwomen, shoemakers, robemakers, cooks, porters, together. And all these wait daily upon the Saint, and the Abbot, and the Brethren. . . . Now altogether there are 342 houses on the demesne or land of St. Edmund's which was under the plough T.R.E

Charter of Thurstan, Archbishop of York, to Beverley (Henry I.'s Reign)

Thurstan, by the grace of God Archbishop of York, to all the faithful, health and God's blessing. Know ye that I have given and granted and confirmed by charter to the men of Beverley all their liberties under the same laws which those of York have in their city. Further, know that our lord King Henry has of his good will given me power of doing this, and by his charter has confirmed our ordinances and laws after the form of the laws of the burgesses of York. I will that my burgesses of Beverley shall have their gild, which I give and grant to them that they may manage their own ordinances for the honour of God. . . . I grant them their toll for ever for eighteen marks annually. . . . I grant the same burgesses free entry and exit in the town and without it, in field and wood, in roads and paths, as well freely and fully as any one can grant and confirm, and they are free and quit of all toll in the whole shire of York. And I will that whoever do contrary to this, be he cursed.

Charter of Henry II. to Nottingham

. . . Know that I have granted, and by this my charter confirmed, to the burgesses of Nottingham all free customs which they had in the time of Henry our grandfather. . . . The men of Notts and Derbyshire should come to the town of Nottingham on Friday and Saturday with their wagons and baggage, nor any one within ten leagues of Nottingham should work at dyeing cloth, except in the town of Nottingham. . . . The way from the Trent should be free to sailors as far as one pole reaches on either side from the mid line of the water. Wherefore I will and ordain that the aforenamed burgesses have and hold the aforenamed customs well and in peace, freely and quietly, and honourably, and fully, and entirely, as they had in the time of King Henry my grandfather.

CHARTER OF RICHARD I. TO RYE AND WINCHELSEA (1191)

Richard, by the grace of God King of England, Duke of Normandy and Aquitaine, Count of Anjou, to the archbishops, bishops, abbots, earls, barons, justiciaries . . . and all his liegemen in all his land, greeting. Know that we have granted and confirmed by this charter that the men of Rye and Winchelsea shall be free and quit, throughout all our lands, here and beyond the sea, of all dues and tolls and customs whatever, wherever they may go. . . . Further, we ordain that no one shall meddle with them or their affairs, and that they shall be free from interference by shire and hundred officers; and if any one wishes to go to law against them, they shall not appear nor plead otherwise than the burgesses of Hastings and the Cinq Ports do, and as they were wont to do in the time of our father Henry.

In return for these liberties they shall provide for my sole service two ships, to complete the number of twenty ships due from Hastings.

JOHN'S CHARTER TO THE BURGESSES OF LEICESTER (1199)

John, by the grace of God King of England, Lord of Ireland, Duke of Normandy and Aquitaine, Count of Anjou, to his archbishops, bishops, abbots, earls, barons, justices, sheriffs, reeves, and all his bailiffs and faithful men, greeting. Know ye that we have granted, and by this our present charter have confirmed, to the burgesses of the town of Leicester that they may go and come freely and without hindrance and may trade through all our land with all things and with their merchandise, saving to us and to others the just and due customs.

From the CHRONICLE OF JOCELIN OF BRAKELOND (1194)

The merchants of London claimed to be free from toll at the fair of St. Edmund (Bury St. Edmunds). Nevertheless many paid it, unwillingly indeed, and under

compulsion; whereof a great tumult and commotion was made among the citizens in London. They came in a body and informed Abbot Samson that they were entitled to be quit of toll throughout all England, by the charter which they had from Henry the Second. The abbot answered . . . that King Henry had done no more than give to the Londoners an exemption from toll throughout his own lordships, and in places where he was able to grant it; but so far as concerned the town of St. Edmund he was not able to do so, for it was not his to dispose of. The Londoners, hearing this, ordered by common council that none of them should go to the fair of St. Edmund. For two years they kept away, whereby our fair sustained great loss. At last, upon the mediation of the Bishop of London and many others, it was settled between us and them that they should come to the fair, and that some of them should pay toll, but that it should be forthwith returned to them, that by such an act the privileges on both sides should be preserved. . . .

In the tenth year of the abbacy of Abbot Samson we complained that the rents of all the good towns and boroughs of England were increasing, all except this our town, which had long yielded forty pounds and had never gone beyond that sum; and that the burgesses of the town were the cause of this thing. For they made so large and so many encroachments in the market-place, of shops and sheds and stalls, without the assent of the convent. The burgesses being summoned made answer that they were under the jurisdiction of the king's courts, and also said that the old custom had been that the bailiffs should, without the interference of the convent, dispose of the places of the shops and sheds in the market-place. . . . Then, taking counsel together, the burgesses offered to the convent a rent of one hundred shillings for the sake of peace; and that they should hold their tenements as they had been wont to do. . . . When the abbot had returned from Germany the burgesses offered him sixty marks, and sued for his confirmation of the liberties

of the town; which the abbot graciously accorded. Notwithstanding our murmuring and grumbling, a charter was made to them in the terms of his promise. . . . The burgesses, from the period when they had the charter, became more confident that they would not lose their tenements and franchises; so that never afterwards were they willing to pay or offer the above-named rent of one hundred shillings. In point of fact, we have from that time to the present lost those hundred shillings, according to the old saying, "He that will not when he may, when he will he shall have nay."

From FITZ-STEPHEN'S DESCRIPTION OF LONDON (about 1175)

Among the noble cities of the world that are celebrated by fame, the City of London, in the kingdom of the English, is the one that pours out its fame more widely, sends to farther lands its wealth and commerce, lifts its head higher than the rest. It is happy in the healthiness of its air, in the Christian religion, in the strength of its bulwarks, the nature of its site, the honour of its citizens, the modesty of its matrons. . . .

The city has on the east the Palatine Castle [*i.e.* the Tower], very great and strong, of which the walls rise from a deep foundation, fixed with a mortar mingled with the blood of beasts. On the west are two towers, very strongly fortified, with the lofty and great wall of the city, having seven twofold gates, and towers towards the north at intervals.

London was also walled and girt with towers in like manner on the south; but the great fish-bearing river Thames, which glides thereby with ebb and flow of the ocean, has by course of time loosened and cast down those walls. Also upwards to the westwards the royal palace is clear to behold above the same river, an incomparable building, with ramparts and bulwarks, two miles from the city, joined to it by a crowded suburb.

Everywhere outside the houses of those living in the suburbs are joined to them the tree-planted and

beautiful gardens of the citizens. Also there are, on the north side, pastures and a pleasant meadow, by which flow river streams, where the wheels of mills turn with a pleasant sound. Very near lies a great forest, with woodland pastures, coverts of wild animals, stags, fallow deer, boars, and wild bulls. . . .

London is honoured by her inhabitants, and adorned by armed men. In the time of slaughter under King Stephen, of those going out to battle there were twenty thousand horsemen, and sixty thousand men on foot. The citizens of London are esteemed all over the kingdom the politest in their manners, the most splendid in their dress and their tables, and the finest in their manner of speech.

Those engaged in the several kinds of business, sellers of various things, contractors for various works, are to be found every morning in their different districts and shops. Besides, there is in London on the river bank, among the wines in ships, and in cellars sold by the vintners, a public food shop; there meats may be found every day, according to the season, fried and boiled, great and small fish, coarser meats for the poor, more dainty for the rich, game-fowls, and small birds. . . .

According to the chronicles, London is a much older city than Rome, for it was founded by Brutus before Romulus and Remus. Accordingly they still have the same laws established in common. Like Rome, London is divided into wards, has annual sheriffs for its consuls, has senatorial and lower magistrates, sewers and aqueducts in its streets, its proper places and separate courts for cases of each kind.

To this city from every nation merchants delight to bring their goods by sea. I do not think there is a city with more praiseworthy customs of church attendance, honour to God's ordinances, alms-giving hospitality, confirming betrothals, contracting marriages, preparing feasts, cheering the guests, and also in care for funerals and the interment of the dead. The only pests of London are the immoderate drinking of fools and the frequency of fires.

1. *What information do you obtain from these passages as to the growth of towns during the eleventh and twelfth centuries?*

2. *Define as exactly as you can the relations between the towns and the manorial lords.*

3. *Carefully describe some of the privileges which the towns obtained.*

CHAPTER IV

THE GILDS

A VERY important feature in connection with English towns from the eleventh to the fifteenth century is the Gild. This institution was a combination of men for a particular purpose, and the idea that union is strength found expression in the formation of gilds even in Early English times. Associations were made for mutual protection against injustice or violence, and these were known as frith gilds. Other clubs were formed with charitable and religious aims, but the gilds in the times of the Norman and Plantagenet kings were combinations of townsfolk with the object of protecting their interests and maintaining and increasing their privileges. There were two kinds—the merchant gild and the craft gild.

The duty of the merchant gild was to maintain and regulate trade. It exercised control over the conditions of buying and selling goods, and the quality of the goods was also under its supervision. Strangers were not encouraged to trade in the town; in fact, restrictions and disabilities were placed upon them, from which the members of the gild were free. For instance, they often had to pay tolls, or duties, on their transactions, when those who belonged to the gild need not pay anything. It appears, then,

that one of the objects of the gild was to prevent outsiders from interfering, and from gaining advantages, in the trade of the town; and consequently the members of the merchant gild would be only those whose interests were concerned in that trade. The gild did not, of course, include all the burgesses, and so was not immediately concerned with the government of the town. A citizen might, in fact, belong to the gild and be a gild official, without being an official of the town. But the interests of the town and of its trade were usually so closely connected that as time went on the government of the gild and of the town became practically identical.

Besides closely safeguarding the town trade from the intrusion of foreigners or strangers, the merchant gild sometimes took the opportunity, which their union offered, of collective bargaining. A seaport town, for instance, was visited periodically by the Venetian fleet, or by vessels bringing goods from some foreign country. The town would require some of these goods, and by refraining from bidding against one another the merchants would be able to make an advantageous common purchase which they could afterwards share.

Besides the merchant gild, which was an association of burgesses with the object of protecting the trading interests generally, there were also gilds whose aim was to look after and to regulate particular industries. As early as the twelfth century we hear of gilds of weavers and bakers in various towns, and as crafts flourished and developed these associations grew in number, in importance, and in influence, and were known as craft gilds. All the

members of any particular craft gild practised the same craft, and they had power to supervise that industry. Such a gild was generally formed under the authority of the mayor of the town, and the town government could, and frequently did, exercise control over the craft gild regulations so that they might not interfere with the general interest of the town.

We find that in time the craft gilds became more important than the merchant gilds, and the reason for this is quite plain. As the different industries expanded it was seen that it was more convenient and more effective to specialise in the direction of particular control of particular crafts; and consequently we may regard the craft gilds as special departments, as it were, of the original merchant gild, formed to carry out in a more detailed way the general regulations which had originally been under the care of the larger body. In the fourteenth century the craft gilds were at the height of their power, and the merchant gilds, although still in existence, took very little part in the management of affairs.

The craft gilds served some useful purposes in looking after their trades. The officials were empowered to take steps to see that the materials were good and that all the workmanship was sound. They made regulations with regard to the hours of labour and invariably forbade work at night, as this was considered likely to be of inferior quality. They encouraged the apprenticeship system by which young people were trained for a number of years before being allowed to practise their craft. They

carefully and systematically suppressed, as far as they could, the production of goods by people who did not belong to the gilds and were not under their supervision. They inflicted punishment where craftsmen or traders were found to have been dishonest. Their theory was that the private interest of the craftsman was not the only important thing, but that the public welfare and the reputation of the trade were to be considered as well.

Finally, the members of the gilds helped each other in many ways. If a member suffered any mishap, such as imprisonment in another town, it was the duty of the gild officials to help him in whatever way they could, and the expense was borne by his fellow-members. He was visited when ill, assisted when poor, and some provision might be made for his family after his death.

THE OLD ENGLISH GILD AT EXETER (probably early 11th century)

This association is associated at Exeter, for love of God, and for our soul's need, both as to our life's prosperity, and also to the latter days, which we desire for ourselves to be at God's doom. Now we have declared that our meeting be thrice in the twelve months, once at St. Michael's mass, the second time at St. Mary's mass, after Midwinter, the third time on All-Hallows mass-day, after Easter. And let each gild brother have two sesters of malt, and every follower one, and a measure of honey; and, at each meeting, let the mass-priest always sing two masses, one for living friends, one for those departed; and every brother of common condition two psalters of psalms, one for living friends, one for those departed. And after a death, each man six masses, or six psalters of psalms; and at a death, each man five pence. And at a house-

burning, each man a penny. And if any man neglect the day of meeting, for the first time three masses, for the second time five, for the third time let him have no excuse, unless it be for sickness or for his lord's need. And if any man neglect the appointed day for his contribution, let him make twofold compensation. And if any man of this society insult another, let him make compensation with thirty pence. Now we pray, for love of God, that every man hold this meeting with integrity, as we have ordered it. May God support us thereto.

From the Rules and Ordinances of the Gild Merchant of King's Lynn

Whoever will enter into the fraternity ought on the first day of his admission to wait and serve before the aldermen and the brethren, honourably, in neat clothes, and a coronet of gold or silver.

If any of the brethren shall disclose to any stranger the counsels of the gild, to their detriment, without the assent of the aldermen and his brethren, he shall forfeit the sum of 32 pence.

If any of the brethren shall fall into poverty or misery, all the brethren are to assist him by common consent out of the chattels of the house, or fraternity, or of their proper own.

If any brother should be brought to trial, either within Lynn or without, the brethren there present ought to assist him in their council, if they are called, to stand with him and counsel him without any costs; if they do not they are to forfeit 32 pence.

If any one should go to sleep at the gild, either at the general meeting or at their feasts and drinking, he is to forfeit 4 pence.

If any poor brother shall die, the aldermen and brethren shall see that his body be honourably buried.

If any brother shall become poor and needy, he shall be supported in food and clothing, according to his need, out of the profits of the lands and goods and chattels of the said gild.

From the ORDINANCES OF THE READING GILD

No foreigner (*i.e.* stranger to the town) shall buy corn on the market day before three o'clock, unless he be a person of distinction; and if he buys, he shall lose his corn and remain at the mercy of the provost.

Also, no foreigner shall bring tanned leather to sell into the town of Reading at any time of year, except only during the fairs. . . .

Also, no foreigner shall retail, in the market, linen or woollen cloth, except only at the proper time, and if any one acts contrary to this ordinance and is found guilty, his goods shall remain in the hands of the stewards, until he makes amends to them.

Also, no foreign fishmonger who brings fish to the market to sell shall cut up his fish to sell, except with the permission of the stewards or bailiffs; and no foreigner can have licence to do this if any gildsman has any fish to sell.

From the ORDINANCES OF THE SOUTHAMPTON GILD

No one shall buy anything in the town of Southampton to sell again in the same town, unless he be of the Gild Merchant or of the franchise; and if any one does it and is found guilty, all that he has thus bought shall be forfeited to the king. . . . And no one except a gildsman shall buy honey, suet, salt herring, nor any kind of oil; nor mill stones, nor fresh leather, nor any kind of fresh skins; nor keep a wine-tavern, nor sell cloth by retail, except on market and fair day; nor keep more than five quarters of corn in his granary to sell by retail, if he is not a gildsman.

From the ORDINANCES OF THE CRAFT GILD OF WHITE-TAWYERS, OR LEATHER-DRESSERS, OF LONDON (1346)

If by chance any one of the trade shall fall into poverty, whether through old age, or because he cannot labour or work, and have nothing with which to help himself,

he shall have every week from the box 7d. for his support, if he be a man of good repute. And after his decease, if he have a wife, a woman of good repute, she shall have weekly for her support 7d from the said box, so long as she shall behave herself well.

And no stranger shall work in the said trade, or keep house for the same in the City, if he be not an apprentice, or a man admitted to the franchise of the said city.

And if any one of the said trade shall have work in his house that he cannot complete, or if for want of assistance such work shall be in danger of being lost, those of the said trade shall aid him, that so the work be not lost.

And if any one of the said trade shall depart this life and have not wherewithal to be buried, he shall be buried at the expense of the common box.

From the ARTICLES OF THE GIRDLERS

. . . No man of the trade shall work on Saturday or the eve of a double feast, after Nonc has been rung (6 o'clock).

Also that no one of the said trade shall set any woman to work other than his wedded wife or his daughter.

Also that no one of the said trade shall be so daring as to work by night at the said trade.

From the ARTICLES OF THE FURBISHERS

No one of the said trade shall make in his house, or allow to be made, pommels or hilts of swords, if they be not of good pattern and steel; and the scabbards must be made of good calf-leather; and if any one shall be found doing to the contrary thereof, let him lose such false work and be punished.

Also, no one shall cause a sword that has been broken to be repaired or made up again, to the deceiving of the people.

1. *What appear to be the principal differences between the Old English gild and the later ones?*

2. *Which, in your opinion, are the most interesting of the craft gild regulations in the above passages, and why?*

3. *State as exactly as you can the reasons for the passing of the various ordinances of the merchant gilds contained in the above extracts.*

CHAPTER V.

MEDIÆVAL AGRICULTURE

We have already described the general arrangement under which land was occupied in Saxon and Norman times. It will be remembered that the population of a village consisted chiefly of villeins and a poorer class of cottars, and by the labour of these people the whole agricultural activity of the manor was carried on. Very soon the lords began gradually to adopt the practice—and we shall have to refer to this later—of receiving rent in money from their villeins instead of in labour. This led to many of the villeins becoming practically free farmers, while the poorer villeins and the cottars developed into a class of wage-earning labourers, with very little land, devoting most of their time to cultivating the land of the lords or others who needed hired labour.

It is estimated that the population of England in the thirteenth century was about two millions; and of this number the vast majority must have been engaged continuously in agriculture. During harvest, when more labour was required than at other seasons, even the inhabitants of the towns often worked in the fields; and, in fact, nearly every one in the country took some share or other in the pursuit

of farming. The rate of production was very low, owing to the unscientific and primitive methods of cultivation, the return being only about four times the quantity sown. This meant that quite a large portion of the country was under cultivation in order to produce the necessary food supply. The crops and the methods of farming hardly varied at all throughout the country, and no attempt was made to take advantage of particular conditions in different districts; wherever the soil was suitable, there farming was carried on in the same uniform way. The idea was the old one of the self-sufficing and self-supporting community. Each manor was to provide as far as possible all the requirements of the people living on it, and only such things as salt and iron need be obtained from outside its boundaries. The population of the country was thickest, of course, in those parts where the land was adapted for agricultural purposes, and in the hilly regions of the north and west there were very few inhabitants.

We have already mentioned that the arable land of a manor was divided, almost invariably, into three large fields; and in any particular year one of these would produce wheat, the second barley or oats, and the third would be lying fallow, in order to be better prepared for the crop of wheat which was to follow. The operations in any one of these fields over a period of three years would be: January, sow barley; August, reap barley; then leave land fallow until next June; then plough; in the autumn sow wheat; next August, reap wheat; then plough ready for barley the following January. From this

it is easy to construct the scheme of the peasant's labours throughout the year.

The ploughing was not very thorough, according to modern ideas, and the soil was not turned much. Oxen were used for drawing the plough, and, as we have noted, the poorer inhabitants of the village used to join forces in this respect. The harvest usually occupied about six weeks, and then all the fences were taken down and the whole live stock of the village might roam over all the fields. Threshing and winnowing were done in the winter, and the grain was stored in barns or in the churches; it was not often sold, unless it was quite certain that there would be enough left to last until the next harvest.

Cattle, sheep, and pigs were kept, and these were looked after by herds who were hired by the whole village. In winter most of the sheep and cattle had to be killed, as there were no root crops on which the animals could be fed during the winter, and there was very little hay. Consequently only a very few animals were preserved. Every manor, of course, engaged in dairy farming and poultry farming, and the products of these occupations were plentiful and cheap. The manor, then, could be self-supporting as far as food was concerned; the corn produced was usually sufficient, and during the winter most of the peasants appear to have lived very largely on salt pork.

It is evident that the system of farming which we have just sketched was very simple and clumsy in many respects. The practice of holding the land in scattered strips was extremely inconvenient, but

was continued for quite a long time for the simple reason that any other arrangement would seem to involve injustice and unfairness. So long as peace was maintained, and famines and pestilences did not trouble the land, the people were content to go on in the same old way. But the whole system depended on this: there must be enough labourers to do the work at the regular wages; if this condition of things was disturbed, the agricultural system would be seriously affected. This serious disturbance did actually occur in the form of the Great Plague of 1349; and from that time modifications and alterations had to be introduced, and gradually the whole system was changed.

From the RULES OF ST. ROBERT GROSSETESTE

Know the reason why you ought for certainty to know the number of your ploughlands, and the number of acres of fallow and of sown land; it is that you may know how much corn you ought to have altogether, how much stock, how much seed the land ought to yield. Know that each ploughland bears poorly that does not yield a hundred seams of corn, then of so many ploughlands as you have, so many hundreds of quarters at the least you ought to have, or be sure that the land is badly tilled, or falsely sown, or the corn stolen. If you have forty ploughlands you ought to have four thousand quarters of corn, if fifty, five thousand, and so on. Know that each acre of fallow ought to support two sheep yearly at the least, then a hundred acres of fallow support two hundred sheep, and so on. If you know how many acres you have sown of each kind of corn, inquire how much the acre of that soil of land takes for sowing, and count the number of quarters of seed, and you shall know the return of seed, and what ought to be over. . . .

Every year, at Michaelmas, when you know the measure of all your corn, then arrange your sojourn for the whole of that year, and for how many weeks in each place, according to the seasons of the year, and the advantages of the country in flesh and in fish, and do not in any wise burden by debt or long residence the places where you sojourn, but so arrange your sojourns that the place at your departure shall not remain in debt, but something may remain on the manor, whereby the manor may raise money from increase of stock, and especially cows and sheep. The wool of a thousand sheep in good pasture ought to yield fifty marks a year, the wool of two thousand a hundred marks, and so forth, counting by thousands. The wool of a thousand sheep in scant pasture ought at the least to yield forty marks, in coarse and poor pasture thirty marks.

From the OFFICE OF SENESCHAL

The bailiff ought to be faithful and profitable, and a good husbandman, and also prudent, that he need not send to his lord or superior seneschal to have advice and instruction about everything connected with his baillie, unless it be an extraordinary matter, or of great danger; for a bailiff is worth little in time of need who knows nothing and has nothing in himself without the instruction of another. The bailiff ought to rise every morning and survey the woods, corn, meadows, and pastures and see what damage may have been done. And he ought to see that the ploughs are yoked in the morning and unyoked at the right time, so that they may do their proper ploughing every day, as much as they can and ought to do by the measured perch. . . . And he ought to see and know how many acres the boon-tenants and customary-tenants ought to plough yearly, and how many the plough of the manor ought to till, and so he may lessen the surplus of the cost. . . . The bailiff ought, in August, to see and command throughout the manors that the corn be well gathered and reaped evenly, and that the cocks and sheaves be small, so will the corn

dry the quicker; and one can load, stack, and thresh the small sheaf best, for there is greater loss in the large sheaf than in the small.

From the Tract HUSBANDRY

You can well have three acres weeded for a penny, and an acre of meadow mown for fourpence, and an acre of waste meadow for threepence-halfpenny, and an acre of meadow turned and raised for a penny-halfpenny, and an acre of waste for a penny-farthing. And know that five men can well reap and bind two acres a day of each kind of corn, more or less. And where each takes twopence a day then you must give fivepence an acre, and when four take a penny-halfpenny a day and the fifth twopence, because he is binder, then you must give fourpence for the acre. And, because in many places they do not reap by the acre, one can know by the reapers and by the work done what they do, but keep the reapers by the band, that is to say, that five men or women, whichever you will, who are called half-men, make a band, and twenty-five men make five bands, and twenty-five men can reap and bind ten acres a day working all day, and in ten days a hundred acres. And see then how many acres there are to reap throughout, and see if they agree with the days and pay them then, and if they account for more days than is right according to their reckoning, do not let them be paid.

From WALTER OF HENLEY'S HUSBANDRY

Some men will tell you that a plough cannot work eight score or nine score acres yearly, but I will show you that it can. You know well that a furlong ought to be forty perches long and four wide, and the king's perch is sixteen feet and a half; then an acre is sixty-six feet in width. Now in ploughing go thirty-six times round to make the ridge narrower, and when the acre is ploughed there you have made seventy-two furlongs, which are six leagues, for let it be known that twelve furlongs are

a league. And the horse or ox must be very poor that cannot from the morning go easily in pace three leagues in length from his starting place and return by three o'clock. . . . And if you have land in which you have cattle, take pains to stock it as the land requires. . . . And because customary servants neglect their work it is necessary to guard against their fraud; and besides the bailiff must oversee all, that they all work well, and if they do not well let them be reproved. . . . You know surely that an acre sown with wheat takes three ploughings, except lands which are sown yearly; and that, one with the other, each ploughing is worth sixpence, and harrowing a penny, and on the acre it is necessary to sow at least two bushels. Now two bushels at Michaelmas are worth at least twelvepence, and weeding a halfpenny, and reaping fivepence, and carrying in August a penny; the straw will pay for the threshing. At three times your sowing you ought to have six bushels, worth three shillings, and the cost amounts to three shillings and three halfpence, and the ground is yours and not reckoned. Change your seed every year at Michaelmas, for seed grown on other ground will bring more profit than that which is grown on your own. Will you see this? Plough two divisions of the same time, and sow the one with seed which is bought and the other with corn which you have grown: in August you will see that I speak truly.

(The above extracts are taken from Miss E. Lamond's edition of *Walter of Henley*.)

From a DOCUMENT GIVING THE EXTENT OF THE MANOR OF BORLEY, IN ESSEX, AND THE SERVICES OF THE TENANTS (14th century)

Walter Johan holds from the lord in villeinage one messuage and 10 acres of land by paying thence yearly at the festival of the Purification of the Blessed Mary, of Hunthield, 4s. 5½d.; and at Easter, 20½d.; and at the feast of St. Michael, 26½d.; and at the feast of Christmas, 1 hen and a half, the hen being of the price of

1½d. And from the feast of St. Michael (Sept. 29) to the feast of St. Peter ad Vincula (Aug. 1) in each week 3 works with one man without the food of the lord, the price of the work being ½d., three weeks being excepted, that is to say, Christmas week, Easter week, and Whitsuntide, in which they will not work unless it is absolutely required by the necessity for binding the grain in autumn and for carrying hay. And he shall plough with his plough, whether he has to join or not, 4 acres of the land of the lord without the food of the lord, the price of each acre being 5½d., of which 2 acres are to be in the season for planting wheat and 2 for oats. . . . And it is to be known that whenever he, along with the other customary tenants of the vill, shall mow the meadow of Rainholm, they shall have, according to custom, 3 bushels of wheat for bread and 1 ram of the price of 18d., and 1 jar of butter, and 1 cheese next to the best from the dairy of the lord, and salt and oatmeal for their porridge, and all the morning milk from all the cows of the whole dairy at that time. And he shall toss, carry, and pile the said acre and a half of hay, and shall carry it to the manor, and it will be reckoned in his works. And he shall have for each work of mowing as much of the green grass, when he shall have mowed it, as he shall be able to carry on the point of his scythe. And when he has carried the said hay he shall have, at the end of the said carrying, the body of his cart full of hay. And he shall reap in autumn from the feast of St. Peter to the feast of St. Michael through the whole autumn, 24 works, without food from the lord, the price of one work being 1d. And he shall carry the grain of the lord and pile it, and it shall be accounted for in his works.

1. *What information do these passages provide concerning the work, duties, and responsibilities of landlords?*

2. *Give a general account of the life of a mediæval agricultural labourer.*

CHAPTER VI

MEDIÆVAL MANUFACTURE

WE are all accustomed to regard modern England as a manufacturing country. Most of our national wealth is derived from the great manufacturing industries which employ far more people than the natural resources of the country could maintain We are, in fact, a manufacturing and commercial nation, and it is difficult to picture a period in our history when manufactures played little part in the national life But until the great Industrial Revolution of the eighteenth century our manufactures were of less importance than our agriculture, and in early times there were hardly any manufactures at all.

So long as the little communities which made up the population of England were self-supporting, providing, as far as possible, for all their needs from the resources of the community itself, manufactures were in their initial stage of growth. All the things that had to be made were made by the family, for the use of that household alone. It soon became plain that it was more economical and more convenient to allow certain articles to be made by special men, who would spend most of their time in working at their own particular crafts.

We have seen that these craftsmen formed themselves into gilds; but each one looked after his own business, bought his own materials and sold his own goods. This was the way in which most manufactures were conducted during the Middle Ages. There were no factories in which hundreds or thousands of artisans worked for an employer and received wages; each craftsman was his own buyer, manufacturer, and salesman. If he prospered, so that more work came to him than he could perform unaided, he might obtain the help of one or two apprentices or journeymen The apprentices were youths who learnt the craft under the direction of the master, and were "bound" to serve him and obey him for a number of years; the journeymen had passed out of the apprenticeship stage and worked for wages. Until the fifteenth century this system was in force throughout England. Its development into the modern factory system will be shown later.

The principal manufacture, practised largely, of course, as a domestic industry, in the days of the Norman and Plantagenet kings was the making of coarse woollen cloth. The weavers of London formed an association—a kind of craft gild—as early as the beginning of the twelfth century. It may be that this association was formed for purposes of protection by foreign weavers who had settled in England; at any rate, we know that Flemish weavers had settled in this country shortly after the Conquest, and to foreigners England owes much of its early progress in cloth-making; from them most of the improvements in manufactures were learnt.

At the same time, Flanders was the great manufacturing country of Europe, and most of the wool which England produced was sent to the Netherlands to be woven there. The English Government from time to time tried to encourage the growth of the English woollen manufacture at the expense of Flanders by forbidding the export of wool; but such regulations could not possibly be kept for long. The growth of the industry in England was slow: the English people appeared to have little aptitude for its development, and seemed to make real progress in the improvement of existing manufactures and the establishment of new ones only when assisted by foreign immigrants. Norfolk and Suffolk were the chief centres of the weaving trade, and some cloth was manufactured also in the west of England. Edward III. was responsible for a very considerable improvement in the English textile industry. He caused many Flemish weavers to settle in England, and laws were passed offering protection to foreign craftsmen settling here. This protection, by the way, was necessary, for the English craftsmen, realising perhaps their inferiority to the foreigners, were very much inclined to be jealous of them, and frequently the lot of an immigrant manufacturer was not a happy one; but in time the feeling of hostility would die down, and the newcomer would be admitted to the craft gild.

PROTECTION FOR JOHN KEMPE (1331)

The King (Edward III.) to all his bailiffs, etc., greeting. Know ye that whereas John Kempe of Flanders, a weaver of woollen cloths, has arrived with the intention

of settling in our kingdom of England for the purpose of exercising his craft, and instructing and teaching those who wish to learn from him, and has brought with him certain men and servants and apprentices of his craft; we receive into our protection the said John, his men-servants and apprentices aforesaid, and all his goods and chattels.

We promise likewise to all men of that craft, and to dyers and fullers, wishing to come from across the sea and settle in our said kingdom for the like purpose, that similar letters of protection will be made out.

From an ACT OF PARLIAMENT OF 1336

It is accorded by our Sovereign Lord the King, his Prelates, Earls, and Barons, with the Assent of the Commons in the Parliament summoned at Westminster, That no merchant, foreign or denizen, upon pain of forfeiture of life, shall bring or cause to be brought, by himself nor by other, privily nor openly from henceforth any wools out of the realm, till by the King and council it be thereof otherwise provided.

Also, it is accorded that no man nor woman, great nor small, of England, Ireland, nor Wales, of whatever estate or condition he be, the King, Queen, and their children only excepted, shall wear cloth other than is made in England, Ireland, or Wales, upon pain of forfeiture of the same cloth, and further to be punished at the King's will. . . .

Also, it is accorded and established that no merchant, foreign nor denizen, nor none other, shall bring or cause to be brought privily nor openly into the said lands of England, Ireland, or Wales any cloths made in any other places than in the same. . . .

Also, it is accorded that all the cloth-workers of strange lands, of whatsoever country they be, which will come into England, Ireland, or Wales, shall come safely and surely, and shall be in the King's protection and safe conduct, to dwell in the same lands, choosing where they will; and to the intent the said cloth-workers shall have

the greater will to come and dwell here, our Sovereign Lord the King will grant them franchises, as many and such as may suffice them.

From a STATUTE OF 1363

. . . For the outrageous and excessive apparel of divers people against their estate and degree to the great destruction and impoverishment of all the land; it is ordained that grooms and servants have clothes whereof the whole cloth shall not exceed two marks, and that they buy no cloth of higher price. . . . That people of handicraft, and yeomen, shall not take nor wear cloth of a higher price than within forty shillings the whole cloth . . . and that their wives and children be of the same condition in their vesture and apparel. . . . That knights shall take and wear cloth of six marks the whole cloth, for their vesture, and of none higher price; and that they wear not cloth of gold, nor mantle, nor gown furred with miniver nor of ermine. . . . That carters, ploughmen, oxherds, shepherds, all other keepers of beasts, threshers of corn, and all other people that have not forty shillings of goods shall not take nor wear any manner of cloth but blanket and russet of twelve pence, and shall wear girdles of linen according to their estate. . . . And it is ordained that if any wear contrary to any of the points aforesaid, he shall forfeit to the King all the apparel that he hath so worn against the form of this ordinance.

From a STATUTE OF 1406

. . . Notwithstanding the good statutes before made, the children whose fathers and mothers have no land nor rent nor other living, but only their service or mystery, be put by their said fathers and mothers and other friends to serve and bound apprentices to divers crafts within the cities and boroughs of the realm . . . so that there is so great scarcity of labourers and other servants of husbandry that the gentlemen and other

people of the realm be greatly impoverished for the cause aforesaid: Our Sovereign Lord the King, considering the said mischief and willing thereupon to provide remedy, by the advice and consent of the Lords Spiritual and Temporal, and at the request of the Commons, hath ordained and established, That no man nor woman, of whatever estate or condition they be, shall put their son or daughter, of whatsoever age he or she be, to serve as apprentice, to no craft nor other labour within any city or borough in this realm, save he have land or rent to the value of twenty shillings by the year at the least; but they shall be put to other labours, as their estates doth require, upon pain of one year's imprisonment.

From a STATUTE OF 1455

Whereas it is showed to our Sovereign Lord the King, by the grievous complaint of the Silk Women and Spinners of the mystery and occupation of silk-working, within the City of London, how that divers Lombards and other strangers, imagining to destroy the said mystery, and to enrich themselves, have brought and daily go about to bring into the realm ribbands and other things concerning the said mystery and occupation, in no manner bringing any good silk unwrought, as they were wont to bring heretofore, to the final destruction of the said mysteries and occupations unless it be the more hastily remedied by the King's Majesty; for reformation thereof the same our Sovereign Lord the King, by the authority aforesaid, will and hath ordained and established, That if any Lombard, or any other person, stranger or denizen, bring or cause to be brought by way of merchandise any wrought silk, ribbons of silk, or any other thing touching the mystery of the silk women, into any port or place of the realm from beyond the sea, those things shall be forfeit.

1. *What do you consider to have been the object of the Statutes of* 1336 *and* 1363? *Was it likely that their provisions would be fully kept?*

2. *State the intentions of Parliament as expressed in the Statute of* 1406. *Was this, do you think, the best way to go to work?*

3. *Explain carefully the attitude of the English towards foreigners in the fourteenth century.*

CHAPTER VII

MEDIÆVAL COMMERCE

It has already been remarked that before the Norman Conquest there was very little commerce between England and foreign countries, all the necessaries of life were produced at home, and luxuries were not in great demand among the uncultured and ignorant peasantry of early England. Of course, some of the refinements of other more advanced nations found their way to the English royal court and the families of the nobles, but until a higher standard of civilisation was instituted under Norman rule there was very little necessity for an extensive foreign trade.

But with the Conquest came a great and important advance in this direction. The Norman kings had lands in France as well as in England, and communication between the two countries was greatly extended The Normans had far greater desires for the pleasures and luxuries of life than had the English, and their demand necessitated a considerable increase in the import of articles which native craftsmen could not produce. Some stimulus, too, was given to commerce by the Crusades; new trade routes were developed between the countries of the East and Europe, and the increased commercial activity affected England to some extent.

During this early period the foreign trade of the country was almost entirely in the hands of foreigners, and it was only by the exercise of all kinds of regulations and restrictions that they were prevented from interfering in the internal trade as well. The Teutonic Hanse established itself in London early in the thirteenth century. This organisation, which had branches in all the countries of northern Europe, was a body of German merchants, who had their chief centres at Lubeck and Cologne; they formed a settlement in London, and carried on commerce, from the other eastern ports as well, with Germany and the Baltic countries, providing England with furs and fish The trade with the southern countries of Europe was controlled by the merchants of the Italian republics, among which were Florence, Venice, and Genoa; London and Southampton were the chief ports for this trade, which consisted largely of silks, spices, fine cloth, jewels and other luxuries. There was also an ever-increasing trade between England and France, and this was carried on in vessels belonging to both countries, it was, in one way, the most important trade of all, for it consisted chiefly of the import into England of wine and salt, articles which were of general demand throughout the country. Other imports included articles which were useful for the farm, such as mill-stones, canvas, and tar (to heal disease in sheep). In return for these various imports, England exchanged raw materials, and the first place among these is taken by wool. For many centuries this commodity was the principal export and the source of much of England's wealth.

The distribution of imported goods throughout the country was not a continuous process: there was not a sufficiently large amount of trade to maintain a steady stream of commerce all the year round; consequently it was found convenient to concentrate the trade in fairs, which were held in different towns at various times during the year. These fairs gave an opportunity for intercourse between merchants and traders from all parts of the country and all the nations of Europe, and they were useful to all classes of society. They were held at Boston, Stamford, Oxford, Nottingham, and many other places, but the two largest, which were famous throughout Europe, were held at Stourbridge, in Cambridgeshire, and at Winchester. The former was convenient for the Baltic and north European trade; it lasted for three weeks in September, and the most important business was the sale of wool and the purchase of the imports of the Hanse merchants, but all trades and nations were represented in the temporary shops or booths of this great annual assembly of traders. Winchester Fair was connected with the ports of London and Southampton, and the commodities of southern Europe and of the East were offered for sale in the streets of the little town which occupied the slopes of St. Giles' Hill during the sixteen days of the fair.

It is important, in conclusion, to know something of the conditions under which the trade and commerce of the country were carried on. In those early days there was no idea of freedom of individual action either in industry or in trade. But there was something which was at that time of even

greater importance than freedom, and that was security; and in order to obtain security it was necessary to make and enforce regulations and restrictions. We have already seen that the merchant and craft gilds made elaborate rules for the government of the various industries and internal trade and foreign commerce was soon brought under the control of a central authority, namely, the Crown. As soon as foreign intercourse assumes large proportions we find laws being passed to regulate it, and the policy of Edward I. and of Edward III. finds expression in numerous legal enactments designed to foster commerce to the greatest possible extent for the benefit of the country and of the royal revenue. Foreigners were encouraged to import goods, and steps were taken to ensure the sovereignty of the sea for England. Such measures as were passed by these kings certainly brought about a great and lasting increase in trade, but English merchants were inclined to be very jealous of the facilities afforded to foreigners. The most important piece of legislation in connection with the commerce of this period was the Ordinance of the Staple, passed in 1353. Edward III. had just been engaged in a war with France, one important result of which was the capture of Calais and the establishment of a safe route to the Continent. Many experiments in the regulation of commerce had already been tried, and the Ordinance of the Staple represented the ideas which appeared to be most satisfactory for the general welfare. The principle was that a certain town, or certain particular towns, should be selected as centres to which all commodities intended

for export should be brought, so that the business transacted should be under proper supervision and control; these towns were the "staple" towns, and by the Ordinance of 1353 there were ten of them assigned for the exclusive sale of wool and other articles. Ten years later a staple was established at Calais, in order to attract foreign merchants who could not be tempted to come into England in spite of the arrangements made for their convenience.

These efforts to regulate commerce were inspired by the best motives, to protect property, to suppress unfair dealing, and to foster and encourage international relations.

From HENRY OF HUNTINGDON'S HISTORY (about 1155)

Britain is rich in metallic veins of iron, tin, and lead. Some of these contain silver also, though not so commonly; silver, however, is received from the neighbouring parts of Germany, with which an extensive commerce is carried on by the Rhine in the abundant produce of fish and meat, as well as of fine wool and fat cattle which Britain supplies, so that money appears to be more plentiful there than in Germany itself, and all the coins introduced into Britain by this traffic are of pure silver.

From MAGNA CARTA (1215)

All merchants shall have safe and secure exit from England, and entry to England, with the right to tarry there and to move about as well by land as by water, for buying and selling by the ancient and right customs, quit from all evil tolls, except such merchants as are of the land at war with us. And if any such are found in our land at the beginning of the war they shall be de-

tained, without injury to themselves or their goods, until information be received by us, or by our chief justiciar, how the merchants of our land found in the hostile country are treated; and if our men are safe there, the others shall be safe in this land.

From the CHARTER OF EDWARD III. FOR THE ST. GILES' FAIR, WINCHESTER (1349)

Know ye, that whereas the Lord William of renowned memory, erst King of England, our ancestor, did grant by Charter . . . a fair at St. Giles' Church, on the hill to the east of the city, for three whole days, . . . and afterwards King Henry granted a fair for eight whole days, . . . and subsequently the Lord Stephen of famous memory, formerly King of England, also by charter granted six full days additional to the fair, so that in all it should last fourteen days, . . . and the Lord Henry of good memory, successor to King Stephen, afterwards granted eight days in augmentation of the fair, so that it should thenceforth last sixteen days . . . the fair shall be proclaimed in the following form. viz., let no merchant or other for these sixteen days, within a circuit of seven leagues round the fair, sell, buy, or set out for sale, any merchandise in any other place than the fair, under penalty of forfeiture of goods to the Bishop. . . And during fair-time the Marshal shall daily ride, immediately after sunset, through the midst of the fair, and proclaim publicly that every trader is forthwith to shut his stall; and after this proclamation no one may sell, or offer for sale, any merchandise, and if he does so and is convicted, he shall pay a fine to the Bishop. . . . And no trader shall have any fire within the fair by night unless it be in lamp or mortar; and if any one do otherwise, he shall be fined. . . . And no tradesman of Winchester or other man shall sell or offer for sale any merchandise or goods in the City during the sixteen days of the fair; and if they do, such goods shall be forfeited to the Bishop. . . . And the Bishop's servants shall take and carry to the pavilion and in presence of the Justiciaries prove and

assay all measures, balances, weights, and ell-wands of the city, of the fair, and the seven-league circuit. . . . And no citizen of Winchester or person not a member of its Merchant Gild may enter the fair with his merchandise and wares without a fine to be paid to the Bishop. . . . And the Bishop, during the sixteen fair-days, shall take toll or custom at all the city gates . . . for every bale of wool four pence . . . for every burden borne by a man one penny; for a falcon sold, four pence; an ape, four pence; a bear, four pence; for a cask of wine and cider, four pence; for a raw hide, a halfpenny; if thirteen geese be sold, one of them. And none shall be quit of such toll save the merchants and citizens of London, Winchester, and the Honour of Wallingford.

From the ORDINANCE OF THE STAPLE (1353)

Whereas, good deliberation having been taken with the Prelates, Dukes, Earls, Barons, and Knights of the Counties, and of the Commons of Cities and Boroughs of our Realm of England, for the damage which hath notoriously come as well to us and to the great men as to our people of the realm of England, and of our lands of Wales and Ireland, because that the staple of wools, leather, and woolfells have been holden out of our realm; we have ordained and stablished the things underwritten:—

First, that the staple of wools, leather, woolfells, and lead, growing or coming forth within our said realm and lands, shall be perpetually holden at the places underwritten, that is to say, for England at Newcastle-upon-Tyne, York, Lincoln, Norwich, Westminster, Canterbury, Chichester, Winchester, Exeter, and Bristol; for Wales, at Caermarthen; for Ireland, at Dublin, Waterford, Cork, and Drogheda, and not elsewhere: And that all the said wools, as well old as new, woolfells, leather, and lead, which shall be carried out of the said realm and lands, shall be first brought to the said staples, and there the said wool and lead, betwixt merchant and merchant, or merchant and others, shall be lawfully weighed by the

standard; and every sack of the same wools so weighed be sealed under the seal of the mayor of the staple; and that all the wools so weighed and sealed . . . shall be brought to the ports underwritten, that is to say: from York to Hull, from Lincoln to Saint Botolf, from Norwich to Great Yarmouth, from Westminster to London, from Canterbury to Sandwich, and from Winchester to Southampton. . . .

Also, to replenish the said realm and lands with money and plate, gold and silver, and merchandises of other lands, and to give courage to merchant strangers to come with their wares and merchandises into the realm and lands aforesaid, we have ordained and established that all merchant strangers, which be not of our enmity, of what land or nation that they be, may safely and surely under our protection and safe-conduct come and dwell in our realm where they will, and from thence return with their ships, wares, and all manner of merchandises, and freely sell their merchandises at the staple and elsewhere within the realm, to any that will buy them, paying the customs thereof due.

1. *Which seem to you to be the most interesting of the Fair regulations? Give reasons for your opinion.*

2. *Describe the general effect of the Ordinance of the Staple.*

3. *Compare the staple towns of the fourteenth century with the important towns of England at the present time.*

CHAPTER VIII

THE BLACK DEATH

We have described the manorial system and the conditions under which the inhabitants of England passed their lives under Saxon and Norman government So long as this government was strong and effective, the material progress of the nation was steady and continuous It was interrupted occasionally by periods of weak rule, of which the worst example was the time when Stephen was king, from 1135 to 1154, but after this disastrous reign civil troubles were not so frequent, and people might follow their occupations with fair safety and security During the two following centuries the manorial system continued, but certain tendencies gradually asserted themselves, and some alteration was effected.

It has been convenient to regard the subordinate classes of the rural population as consisting of well-defined and separate sections, such as villeins, socmen, and cottars It is not necessary to suppose that these classes were rigidly separated, but the terms serve well enough to indicate a broad distinction. However, as time went on, men who held no land, or whose holdings were so small as to leave them with time to spare, formed a class of

labourers who were willing to sell their services for money wages. This class tended always to increase, because there was an ever-increasing demand for labour of this kind. The demand came from the lords of the manor, who were generally adopting the practice of cultivating their demesnes by hired labour in preference to the unwilling boon-work and week-work of their villeins. The latter usually found it more advantageous to devote all their time to their own land and pay a fixed money rent to their lords instead of rendering the old services in labour. This commutation, as it was called, of labour services for money payments satisfied both villeins and lords, and became a very common practice. It is noteworthy that it tended to improve the position of the serfs, who were not bound to the manor so closely as before, if the lord could dispense with the labour of the villein he would be much more willing to give him his freedom, so long as there was a sufficient supply of hired labour to be had. Although serfdom was not entirely abolished until the end of the sixteenth century, a considerable advance towards freedom had been made when the Black Death visited the country

This terrible plague made its appearance just at the time when the country was in a most flourishing and prosperous condition. Edward III. had undertaken a war with France, and the prowess of the English archers had been shown in the glorious victory of Crecy in 1346. Two years later the plague reached these shores and commenced its work of destruction.

The Black Death came from Asia by way of Italy

and France. It first appeared at the seaport towns and spread rapidly all over the country, and from a careful study of reliable records it has been calculated that at least one-third of the whole population of the country perished. The chroniclers of the time no doubt exaggerated the extent of the ravages of the plague, and some of the figures they give are plainly impossible; but from other sources it seems clear that whole districts were almost entirely depopulated, monasteries were left without occupants, parishes without priests, manors without heirs, and the crowded towns, where conditions were very insanitary, suffered very severely indeed.

The effects of the Black Death were extremely important. The immediate consequence was a scarcity of labour, for the poorer classes naturally suffered most from sickness and from famine; and this scarcity of labour meant higher wages both in towns and in the country. Many tenants died without heirs, and their holdings passed into the possession of the lords. Thus the lords had more land to cultivate, and there was less labour available. Naturally the labourers took advantage of this situation to demand higher rates of wages, and the landowners, rather than let the land go out of cultivation altogether, were at first obliged to pay at the dearer rate. It appears that the wages of the labourers rose by 50 or 60 per cent., and craftsmen of various kinds also benefited in a similar way. Now, the employers of labour, quite naturally, disliked paying these higher wages, and steps were immediately taken by them to attempt to

revert to the old rates. It must be remembered that those who owned the land were also those who made the laws, for Parliament consisted almost entirely of barons and proprietors of land; consequently we are not surprised to find that they enacted a series of laws known as the Statutes of Labourers, which were designed to compel the workers to accept the old rates of wages. No labourers were to take, no employers were to give, higher wages than had been customary before the plague; no labourers were to refuse offers of work on the old terms, and they were not to leave their employment under penalty of imprisonment and branding. But these laws failed in their object; the demand for labour was greater than the supply, and the labourers had the advantage. It was found quite impossible to carry out the Statutes, and wages remained high. Further, the expenses of the labourers rose very little, if at all; for their necessaries, chiefly food, did not depend much upon the price of labour, which affected manufactures and articles requiring a considerable amount of labour in their production. For instance, agricultural implements and building materials were much more expensive than formerly.

We see, then, that the landowners were very badly hit, having to pay more for labour and materials, while the labourers and craftsmen were much better off than before. The result was that the landowners gradually gave up cultivating the land on their own account, and there was a great increase in the number of the small farmers. This result was not immediate, for, as we shall shortly see, an

attempt was made in some parts of the country to compel the villeins to render once more the old labour services which had been generally discarded for money rents. But where the old obligations could not be enforced, the scarcity of labour and its high price compelled the lords to let their land, if they could, to tenants who would generally cultivate it by the labour of themselves and their families, thus avoiding the payment of high wages. At first it appears to have been customary for the landlord to provide the stock—that is, all the materials, cattle, etc.—required for the land, as well as the land itself, and some of the tenant-farmers flourished so well that they were soon able to provide stock for themselves.

Thus the Black Death, which was in itself a terrible catastrophe, led directly to changes of the utmost importance in regard to the conditions of the inferior classes. They became more independent, more prosperous, and more intelligent; their relations with their lords underwent a considerable change, many became free tenants, and landless labourers were often able ultimately to acquire land and stock on lease from a landlord. The old system was breaking up, villeinage was disappearing, and these tendencies received a great stimulus from the plague.

From KNIGHTON'S HISTORY

The grievous plague penetrated the sea-coasts from Southampton and came to Bristol, and there almost the whole strength of the town died, struck as it were by sudden death; for there were few who kept their

beds more than three days, or two days, or half a day; and after this the fell death broke forth on every side with the course of the sun. There died at Leicester in the small parish of St. Leonard more than 380; in the parish of Holy Cross more than 400; and so in each parish a great number. . . . In the same year there was a great plague of sheep everywhere in the realm, so that in one place there died in one pasturage more than 5000 sheep, and so rotted that neither beast nor bird would touch them. And there were small prices for everything on account of the fear of death. For there were very few who cared about riches or anything else. For a man could have a horse, which before was worth 40s., for 6s. 8d., a fat ox for 4s., a cow for 12d., a heifer for 6d., a fat wether for 4d., a sheep for 3d., a lamb for 2d., a big pig for 5d., a stone of wool for 9d. Sheep and cattle went wandering over fields and through crops, and there was no one to go and drive or gather them, so that the number cannot be reckoned which perished in the ditches in every district for lack of herdsmen; for there was such a lack of servants that no one knew what he ought to do. In the following autumn no one could get a reaper for less than 8d. with his food, a mower for less than 12d. with his food. Wherefore many crops perished in the fields for want of some one to gather them; but in the pestilence year, as is above said of other things, there was such abundance of all kinds of corn that no one much troubled about it. . . . Priests were in such poverty that many churches were widowed and lacking the divine offices, masses, matins, vespers, sacraments, and other rites. A man could scarcely get a chaplain under £10 or 10 marks to minister to a church. And when a man could get a chaplain for 5 or 4 marks or even for 2 marks with his food when there was an abundance of priests before the pestilence, there was scarcely any one now who was willing to accept a vicarage for £20 or 20 marks; but within a short time a very great multitude of those whose wives had died in the pestilence flocked into orders, of whom many were illiterate and little more than laymen, except so

far as they knew how to read, although they could not understand.

Meanwhile the king sent proclamation into all the counties that reapers and other labourers should not take more than they had been accustomed to take under the penalty appointed by statute. But the labourers were so lifted up and obstinate that they would not listen to the king's command, but if any one wished to have them he had to give them what they wanted, and either lose his fruit and crops or satisfy the lofty and covetous desires of the workmen. . . . And afterwards the king had many labourers arrested, and sent them to prison; many withdrew themselves and went into the forests and woods; and those who were taken were heavily fined. Their ringleaders were made to swear that they would not take daily wages beyond the ancient custom, and then were freed from prison. And in like manner was done with the other craftsmen in the boroughs and villages. . . . After the aforesaid pestilence many buildings, great and small, fell into ruins in every city, borough, and village for lack of inhabitants, likewise many villages and hamlets became desolate, all having died who dwelt there. . . . Magnates and lesser lords of the realm who had tenants made abatements of the rent in order that the tenants should not go away on account of the want of servants and the general dearness, some half the rent, some more, some less, some for two years, some for three, according as they could agree with them. Likewise, those who received of their tenants day-work throughout the year, as is the practice with villeins, had to give them more leisure, and remit such works, so that the homes should not be ruined and the land everywhere remain entirely uncultivated.

From the SECOND STATUTE OF LABOURERS (1350–1)

Whereas late against the malice of servants, which were idle, and not willing to serve after the pestilence without taking excessive wages, it was ordained by our

Lord the King . . . that such manner of servants, as well men as women, should be bound to serve, receiving salary and wages, accustomed in places where they ought to serve in the 20th year of the King that now is, or five or six years before; . . . and now forasmuch as it is given the King to understand in this present Parliament that the said servants having no regard to the said ordinance, but to their ease and singular covetise, do withdraw themselves to serve great men and other, unless they have wages to double or treble of that they were wont to take the said twentieth year, to the great damage of the great men, and impoverishing of all the commonalty: Wherefore . . . be ordained and established the things underwritten :—

First, that carters, ploughmen, drivers of the plough, shepherds, swineherds, dairymen, and all other servants, shall take wages accustomed the said twentieth year or four years before . . . and that none pay in the time of haymaking but a penny a day; and a mower of meadows for the acre five pence, or by the day five pence; and reapers of corn in the first week of August two pence and the second three pence and so till the end of August, and less in the country where less was wont to be given, without meat or drink; and that all workmen bring openly in their hands to the merchant towns their instruments, and there shall be hired in a common place and not privily.

Also, that none take for the threshing of a quarter of wheat or of rye over two pence, and the quarter of barley, beans, pease, and oats one penny, if so much were wont to be given . . . and that the same servants be sworn two times in the year before lords, stewards, bailiffs, and constables of every town, to hold and do these ordinances; . . . and that those which refuse to make such oath or to perform that they be sworn to shall be put in the stocks by the said lords by three days or more, or sent to the next gaol there to remain till they justify themselves.

Also, that carpenters, masons and tilers, and other workmen of houses shall not take by the day for their work but in manner as they were wont, that is to say:

a master carpenter three pence and another two pence, a master mason four pence and other masons three pence and their servants one penny, tilers three pence and their knaves one penny, plasterers and other workers of mud walls and their knaves, by the same manner, without meat or drink one shilling from Easter to St. Michael. . . .

Also that cordwainers and shoemakers shall not sell boots nor shoes nor none other thing touching their mystery, in any other manner than they were wont the said twentieth year; also that goldsmiths, saddlers, horsesmiths, spurriers, tanners, curriers, tanners of leather, tailors, and other workmen, artificers, and labourers, and all other servants not here specified, shall be sworn before the justices to do and use their crafts and offices in the manner as they were wont to do the said twentieth year, without refusing the same because of this ordinance. . . .

. . . Also if any of the said servants, labourers, or artificers do flee from one county to another, because of this ordinance, the sheriffs of the county where such fugitive persons shall be found, shall do them to be taken at the commandment of the justices of the counties from whence they shall flee, and bring them to the chief gaol of the same county, there to abide till the next sessions of the same justices.

1. *Give your opinion as to the writer of the first extract.*
2. *Summarise the causes, provisions, and probable results of the Statute of Labourers.*

CHAPTER IX

THE PEASANTS' REVOLT

THE Statutes of Labourers, as we have pointed out, were a failure; they were the cause of great irritation, for the landlords did not intend to forego their privileges and their profits without a struggle. But the peculiar conditions which followed the Black Death had shown the peasants of England that to some extent the remedy for their grievances was in their own hands—they must take every advantage of the situation and strive their utmost to maintain the high wages and improved conditions which had resulted from the scarcity of labour. In order to pursue this object they formed themselves into unions, much as the artisans of to-day form trade unions for the protection of their interests.

Now we must turn to the landlords and ascertain what steps they took to attempt to restore something of their old power and profits. It has already been noticed that the lord had usually been willing to take from his villeins money instead of the whole or part of the work which was due, and which might be performed in a very half-hearted fashion. It seems quite clear that the landlords, faced with great loss or even ruin as a result of the events we have described, often tried to revert to the old order of things and

exact from their serfs the old labour rents which they had commuted for money payments. The theory was that all the rights and privileges which the villeins had obtained had been granted by the indulgence of the lord, who was entitled to reverse the arrangements if he chose. Now the lords had control of all the machinery of the law; if a case concerning a villein's position was brought to trial, it was in the manorial court of the lord of the manor, and the verdict was not likely to be favourable to the villein. The process of commutation was stopped; the practice was not so prevalent in some parts of the country as in others, and in the eastern counties it had not gone very far; and the labour services were strictly exacted.

A state of discontent, of friction, and uneasiness was created. The interests of the lords and of the peasants were in conflict, and the former, with their superior power in the courts and in Parliament, became the object of intense dislike and hatred on the part of the people they attempted to oppress. The fact that the peasants were able to form combinations against the lords shows clearly that they realised the danger which threatened them, and that there was some agency at work which helped them in the formation of what was practically a national organisation.

This movement towards organisation was perhaps assisted by the influence of the followers of Wyclif, one of the greatest of Englishmen. He taught that it was wrong to be under the authority of sinful men, and that wicked popes, priests, friars, or rulers should not be obeyed. He denounced in strong

language the sinfulness of the lives of many churchmen, and caused the Bible to be translated into English so that its truths might be conveyed directly to the humblest and most ignorant people. His doctrines were quite revolutionary, and were spread abroad throughout the country by his "poor priests," who appealed to the awakening minds and to the hearts of the countryfolk in a fashion never before experienced. These preachers naturally sympathised with the wrongs and the sufferings of the people to whom they preached. They told them that the hard labour of the people provided ease and luxury for the lords, who sought to reduce them again to serfdom; they helped to encourage the spirit of independence and resistance which was waiting to be roused in the hearts of the peasants; and by their practice of moving about from one part of the country to another they would be able to keep the various districts in communication, so that the men of Kent knew exactly the conditions and the intentions of the men of Essex and of East Anglia.

The revolt was led by the men of Kent, who, by the way, were not serfs, but must have been urged by sympathy with the popular movement. Risings of the peasants occurred almost exactly at the same time in the eastern counties and, in fact, all over England, clearly showing that the whole revolt was previously arranged.

The object of the revolt was, vaguely, freedom. Manor-houses and monasteries were attacked, and documents which gave evidence of serfdom were sought out and burned. Towns were threatened, and the bands of peasants from Kent and Essex marched

on London. They were induced to disperse by promises, which were not intended to be kept, of acceding to their demands for release from all manner of bondage. After the first danger was over, the various sections of the peasants were separately defeated and the leaders imprisoned or executed. The revolt was put down with a stern hand, and the lords appeared to have gained the victory. This, however, was not altogether the case; in reality they had learned a lesson. If the peasants had had a little more preparation, if they had not been so unlucky as to lose Wat Tyler, one of their best leaders, they might perhaps have succeeded. It might well be that the ideals cherished by such men as Tyler and John Ball included more than mere relief from serfdom; they may have had visions of the complete destruction of feudalism and the reorganisation of society. But, however this may be, it is quite certain that the lords realised the peril which had threatened them, and from that time labour services and serfdom gradually ceased; the claims of the landlords were dropped and commutation became a general practice.

It is worth noticing that this great and important revolt did not spring from poverty or want. The peasants were in a flourishing and prosperous condition, wages were high, food was abundant. The insurrection was undertaken in no spirit of despair; it was not a last resort of a crushed and hopeless people. It was rather an expression of aspiration, the outcome of the new spirit born of changed conditions and the teachings of Wyclif's priests. The insurgents did not succeed in their

revolt; but gradually the landlords lost their hold over the villeins, as altered conditions made their services less necessary, and serfdom practically disappeared during the following century.

A Letter of Edward III.

1364. By the king. The tenants of the manor of Crondale, which, as we have understood, is of the ancient demesne of the crown of England, show us that you demand from them other services and other customs than they are bound to perform by right, and such as their predecessors were not accustomed to perform in the days when the said manor was in the hands of our progenitors, the kings of England; to their great hurt and destruction of their estate, whereat we are very ill pleased. Therefore we command and charge you not to demand henceforth of the said tenants nor to burden them with other services and customs than their ancestors, duly redressing what you have done against them herein, so that they may not have occasion to complain again to us to obtain remedy. And do not neglect this, upon the peril which will ensue.

To our beloved in God, the Prior of Winchester.

From the Calendar of Patent Rolls (Summaries of Documents)

1382. Protection, for life, for the king's kinswoman, Margaret, Countess of Devon, and her household, servants, tenants, and possessions, with free ingress into and egress from the city of Exeter; this protection to be publicly proclaimed whenever she shall require it, her tenants, bond and free, being strictly enjoined to render the services customary before the late disturbance.

1381. Richard II. charges John Montagu and ten other persons to organise the resistance to the insurrection in the counties of Southampton and Wilts. All the knights and squires of the two counties must hold themselves in readiness to march in arms.

1384. *In spite of the evidence taken in his Parliament of 1382* Richard, at the request of the queen, grants his pardon to John Haukewode of Salisbury, who has taken part in the revolt.

1381. The king, in consideration of the revolt which has recently troubled his realm, charges the Earl of Warwick and many other persons to maintain peace in Warwickshire.

1383. The king, at the request of the queen, pardons John Colles, of the county of Buckingham, the part taken by him in the insurrection.

1381. The king forbids the sheriffs of Oxford and Berkshire from setting at liberty without caution the insurgents who have been or will be arrested in those counties.

1382. The king grants pardon to the inhabitants of Beverley, in Yorkshire, for the troubles which have arisen in that town. Restitution of confiscated goods. But the inhabitants, except ten of them, have to pay a fine of eleven hundred marks.

1382. The king, at the request of the queen and by a fine of ten pounds, pardons Hugh de Garewell of Lincoln the part he has taken in the insurrection.

1381. The king orders an inquiry to be made on the depredations committed by the rebels in the county of Cambridge, to the injury of John Luttrell.

From WYCLIF'S TRACT ON SERVANTS AND LORDS

See we now how lords should live in their estate. First they should know God's law and study it and maintain it, and destroy wrong and maintain poor men in their right to live in rest, peace, and charity, and suffer no men under colour of them to do extortions, beat men, and hold poor men out of right by strength of lordships. . . . Injuries or wrongs are done to poor men many ways; for prelates teach them not truly God's law, neither in word nor example of holy life, and yet they curse for the offerings which poor men give, whereas

they should rather give them worldly goods than take of them; for prelates waste in pride, gluttony, and great feasts of lords and rich men the wealth of poor men, while the latter are in much pain and wretchedness in body and soul. . . . Also lords many times do wrongs to poor men by extortions and unreasonable fines and unreasonable taxes, and take poor men's goods and pay for them only with white sticks, and despise them and menace them and sometimes beat them when they ask their pay. And these lords devour poor men's goods in gluttony and waste and pride and they perish by mischief and hunger and thirst and cold, and their children also; and if their rent be not readily paid their beasts are seized and they are pursued without mercy, though they be never so poor and needy and overcharged with age, feebleness, and loss of cattle and with many children. . . . And so in a manner they eat and drink poor men's flesh and blood . . . and men of law, that should destroy such falseness by their offices, and to each man right and reason, maintain wrong for money and fees and robes, and forbear poor men from their right; so that it is better for them not to seek after their right, be it never so open, than to pursue and lose more cattle by deceits and delays and evil wiles that the lawyers practise. . . . Also strifes and debates are rife in our land, for lords strive with their tenants to bring them into thraldom more than they should by reason and charity; . . . and whoso may be stronger will have his will done, be it wrong or right. . . . And some lords, though they seem never so holy and devout in their prayers, will, in order to maintain the title to their lordship, beat men out of the county and maintain other misdoers thereto. . . . In merchants dwells guile in great plenty, for they swear falsely by Almighty God in Trinity that their wares cost so much and are so true and profitable, to beguile people and to teach young apprentices this cursed craft, and prize them most that most beguile the people. . . . And yet in clerks dwells most guile, for they deceive men by their vain prayers and pardons and indulgences.

1. *What information is to be gathered from the above summary of some of the instructions of Richard II?*

2. *What appears to have been the attitude of Wyclif on social questions?*

3. *Enumerate the chief grievances of the peasants.*

CHAPTER X

THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY

DURING the fifteenth century, while the broad features of English social life remained very much the same as in the previous two or three centuries, many important and interesting changes were silently but surely taking place; the Middle Ages were drawing to a close, and modern conditions and ideas were beginning to assume shape and form. The period is marked by a renewal of the war with France by Henry v., and by a series of battles, fought between opposing factions of barons, which are usually known as the Wars of the Roses. But these military activities, although somewhat distracting, did not unduly interfere with the social and industrial life of the nation, except that the expenses had to be met, and the country was able to meet them without serious inconvenience.

In that century we see evidences of all kinds of decay; the nobility, the towns, royal power, all participate in this change. But by the end of the century a general reconstruction seems to have taken place; the royal authority is re-established, new towns take the place of the old ones, and a new and vigorous nobility supplants the feudal aristocracy. A new division appears in society: it will be remem-

bered *that the feudal arrangement was a number of local groups, each group consisting of individuals of various positions and privileges*, and each connected in some way with the king. But by the time of the Tudor monarchs the old local divisions were not so important as the main class distinctions, such as those to which we are accustomed at the present day. The system of Capitalism had begun to show signs of life, and the difference between employer and the employed was the most important line of separation of classes. The moneyed or capitalist class rises in power, and the labouring class is recognised as a definite section of the community.

The nobles had at first suffered from the effects of the great plague and the shortage of labour; but as the demand for wool, both for export and for home manufacture, increased, they were able to retrieve their position and renew their wealth. The change from arable to pasture went on continuously during the fifteenth century, and, as we shall see, resulted in grave national evils. Fewer labourers were required, and there is no doubt that some parts of the country were seriously depopulated. It is a sign of the new spirit of gain which now possessed the landowners that they did not make any attempt to fulfil their obligations to the inferior classes, but adopted just that course of action which was most profitable to themselves. The villeins had secured their freedom, and a large class of yeomen, or tenant-farmers, was rapidly becoming the backbone of English country life.

In town life, too, change was taking place. The

gilds still continued to do their work, but in a different way. The merchant gild had originally been established to safeguard the interests of those engaged generally in trade, and the craft gild was at first an association of men employed in a particular trade, formed in order to regulate and protect that industry. In the fifteenth century the merchant gild had practically disappeared, and the craft gilds had triumphed; but they were no longer societies for the protection of craftsmen of small capital and resources; they no longer strove to secure fair pay and good conditions for all their members. They had become associations for the investment of capital, and the tendency was for a craft gild to become a close and narrow corporation, with a restricted membership. The journeymen—those who were not masters but worked for hire—sank in the social scale, and another instance is thus provided of the separation of interests between the classes of employer and employed.

But industries of all kinds continued to flourish, excepting, perhaps, one of the most important of all—the tilling of the soil. It seems certain that the population of the towns was considerably increased by labourers from the country districts who found themselves without employment owing to the growth of sheep farms; and these labourers were glad to take any opportunity of work which might present itself. There was thus an abundant supply of labour for the industries which were practised in the towns, and naturally the position of artisans was made much worse. The employers generally were able to live in wealth and luxury, but there

is evidence of great misery and poverty among the lower class.

One of the industries which prospered was the woollen industry, which, as we must always remember, was one of the chief sources of the nation's wealth throughout the Middle Ages. Not only were large quantities exported to the manufacturing towns of Flanders, but the home manufacture was rapidly increasing. The encouragement given to this industry by former kings had borne fruit, and in many parts of the country, more especially in Norfolk, the manufacture of woollen cloth was a most important trade.

Commerce continued to expand, but many difficulties had to be encountered by those who sought wealth in this direction. It seems that the Channel ports were particularly liable to attack by French ships and by pirates of all sorts. Frequently sudden descents would be made upon some helpless port, houses would be burnt, and prisoners and plunder carried away. In fact, the southern ports appear to have decayed altogether during the fifteenth century, and much of their trade was transferred to London and to the ports on the eastern coast. But the prevalence of this piracy and plundering probably means that the commerce of the country was in a flourishing condition, such as would be likely to attract these lawless sea-rovers. The Government seemed unable to afford protection, and the most common expedient was for the merchants to collect their vessels together into fleets so as to be able to repel any attacks which might be made. A better plan would have been to develop a strong

navy, but this would have been too expensive a remedy in those days

On the whole, the fifteenth century was a fairly satisfactory one for Englishmen, in spite of the ever-increasing gulf which was separating the rich from the poor, and the accession of Henry VII. in 1485, by putting an end to the disturbing and destructive petty warfare between sections of the feudal nobility, gave additional security and established a firm and settled government, one of the first essentials for national prosperity

From the LIBEL (LITTLE BOOK) OF ENGLISH POLICY (about 1436)

The true process of English policy
  From attack to keep this realm in rest
That of our England no man may deny
  Nor say in sooth but it is one of the best;
  That he who sails south, north, east, and west,
May carry merchandise and keep the admiralty,
That we be masters of the narrow sea.

. . . .

Shall any prince, whatever be his name,
  Who hath nobles very much like ours,
Be lord of sea, and Flemings, to our blame
  Stop us, take us, and so fade the flowers
  Of English state, and destroy our powers?
For cowardice, alas! that it so should be,
Therefore I begin to write now of the sea.

. . . .

Spain and Flanders are to each other brother,
And neither can well live without the other.
They cannot live to maintain their degrees
Without our English commodities,
Wool and tin; for the wool of England
Sustains the Flemish commons, I understand,

What then hath Flanders, be the Flemish pleased or loth,
But a little madder and Flemish cloth?
By weaving our wool into substance
Their commons live, this is their governance;
Without which they can not live at ease,
Thus they must starve or with us must have peace.

. . . .

The great galleys of Venice and Florence
Are well laden with things of pleasure,
With all spicery and grocer's ware,
With sweet wines and all manner of merchandise.
Apes and japes and marmosets tailed,
And trifles that little have availed,
And things with which they neatly cheat our eye,
With things, not enduring, that we buy.

. . . .

Now, then for love of Christ and of His joy,
Bring England out of trouble and annoy,
Take heart and wit, and set a governance,
Set many minds without variance
To one accord and unanimity,
Put to good will for to keep the sea.

. . . .

First for worship and profit also,
And to rebuke each evil-minded foe;
Thus shall riches and worship to us belong.
Then to the noble shall we do no wrong,
To bear coin in figure and in deed,
To our courage and to our enemies' dread.

[The noble, a coin issued by Edward III., bore the imprint of a sword and a ship.]

From "THE COMMODITIES OF ENGLAND," BY SIR JOHN FORTESCUE (before 1451)

These be the commodities of England: First, England hath three rivers within itself coming out of the sea into the midst of the land, whereby the ships of all nations may convey and sail into the greatest cities of the land. . . .

Secondly, England is endowed and honoured with many good harbours and good roads. . . .

The third commodity of this land is that the ground thereof is so good and commodious to the sheep, that bear so good wool and is so plenteous thereof that all the merchants of two lands cannot buy that one merchandise.

The fourth commodity that the commons have with them woollen cloth ready made at all times to serve the merchants of any two kingdoms, Christian or heathen.

The fifth commodity is the great plenty of ores of tin, lead, and sea coal.

The sixth commodity is the greatest treasure of the world, and is most plenty thereof, that is, gold and silver, whereof we have the worthiest payment passing any land, Christian or heathen.

The seventh commodity is that the common people of this land are the best fed, and also the best clad, of any nation, Christian or heathen.

And also many other commodities that I have not rehearsed, as iron and salt, honey and wax, reasonable enough; and so of all the commodities that are in all Christian lands God hath sent us part in this realm; save only wine and oil, for which God hath sent us right good ale and mighty drink for the common people. And thereto more plenty of fish and flesh than to any country of the world.

1. *What is your opinion of the views of the writer of the foregoing poem?*

2. *In what way have the "commodities," or natural advantages, of England altered since the fifteenth century?*

PART II

CHAPTER I

THE CHURCH AND ITS INFLUENCE ON SOCIETY

BESIDES the barons and other landholders, the villeins, the merchants and the craftsmen, whose history has been outlined in the preceding chapters, there was another important class of men whose influence on the life of the nation during the middle ages was very considerable, these were the clerics, or churchmen. Bishops, abbots, priests, monks, friars, all played their part in the making of our history, and we ought to understand as clearly as possible the nature of the influence, both for good and for evil, which was exercised by the Church in England.

Christianity first came to England at the end of the sixth century, at a time when the country was divided into several kingdoms, which were usually at strife with each other. It is important to remember that the missionaries came from Rome, and almost from the very first the Pope was regarded by churchmen throughout England as their head; they did not belong to small kingdoms, occupied by petty strife and jealousy; their organisation was much larger and greater and

more solid, and the example of unity which was offered by the Church no doubt helped Englishmen to an idea of the value of a similar unity in the government of England. This was a very useful example to set; and by encouragement of peace and order the Church did a fine work, although it could not entirely curb the fierce and restless spirit of the men of that time.

Much of the work of the Church was done by the monks. These were men who withdrew from ordinary pursuits and occupations to live in monasteries, where they hoped to find that opportunity for a godly life which they could not get amidst the strife and violence of the world outside. They lived according to a strict rule, spending their time in hard work, in study, or in prayer. A monastic life in those early days seemed to be the only refuge for a man who sincerely wished to live a good life. Kings and nobles made gifts of land and property to the monasteries, many of which grew to be enormously wealthy, and with this wealth came the temptation to idleness and wickedness. But at first the monks fulfilled some very useful purposes; they kept learning alive in the country, for they were almost the only people with inclination or leisure to devote to study; and a very large proportion of the literary work of the middle ages, including most of the histories and chronicles, is the work of monks. Further, they relieved poverty and distress; they never refused food or shelter to travellers, and they gave assistance to poor persons; they had abundant opportunities of doing good, and there is little

doubt that in many ways their influence was beneficial.

For administrative purposes the country was divided into districts called dioceses, each in the charge of a bishop, while the spiritual needs of the people in the villages and towns were attended to by the parish priests. All those who were attached in any way to the service of the Church were known as clerks, and their power and wealth tended to increase continually. They regarded themselves as being apart from the royal authority and subject only to Rome. This attitude did not appear likely to assist in the development of sound and effective government; and Henry II., who worked very hard towards this object, tried to bring the Church under his control, and failed. His failure shows how vast was the power of this body, which, however, was beginning to show signs of exercising that power on its own behalf, and not for the general welfare. England was made very much poorer by the loss of immense sums of money which were claimed by the Popes; during the thirteenth century the papal exactions were a serious drain on the resources of the country, while the Church itself declined considerably in usefulness and good influence. Churchmen became more selfish and ambitious, and very often neglected their duties. An attempt was made to revive the true ideals of Christianity by the friars. These men did not withdraw from the world, like the monks, but went about among the people, teaching them and helping them in any way they could. They did not attach themselves to any existing

religious body, but wandered about from place to place, living in poverty and dependent entirely upon the charity of the people among whom they laboured. At first they did very good work, and their value was recognised by the Church; but before very long their reputation for piety and holy living induced benevolent people to make gifts to their orders, and the inevitable result was that they degenerated into idleness and uselessness, and generally did more harm than good

Towards the end of the fourteenth century there were many complaints in England concerning the position of the Church. Dissatisfaction was expressed with the Pope, who was by this time a political as well as a spiritual ruler, and had come to regard England as one of his chief sources of revenue; the bishops, abbots, and friars were blamed for their insincerity and indifference; and the spokesman of all this discontent was John Wyclif. He did not wish to injure or destroy the Church, but to improve it and make it a more real and living force for the benefit of the people. He did not approve of the possession by the Church of temporal power and wealth, and considered that these things hindered the good work which might be accomplished. But most churchmen regarded his teachings as an attack upon themselves, and were able to suppress his followers and to destroy much of the effect of his work, which, however, had spread to foreign countries, and there produced notable results, especially in Bohemia.

It was not until the sixteenth century was well advanced that papal authority in England was

finally renounced. The Tudor principle of absolute monarchy could not admit of interference by a foreign ruler in English affairs, and the advance of knowledge demanded other changes in the constitution of the Church. As a result of these new ideas, the monasteries were suppressed, and the Church was brought under the control of the Government.

In spite of innumerable abuses in the course of its history, in spite of all the indifference, and even wickedness and crime of which churchmen were often guilty, the Church played a useful part during the middle ages. The priests who lived and laboured in the country parishes and in the towns usually did their work conscientiously and well, conveying to the people under their charge the benefits and consolations of religion, although mediæval religious ideas were disfigured by much gross superstition and ignorance, there can be no doubt that without the services in the churches and the ministrations of the priests the lives of the common people would have been much more depraved and degraded than they actually were.

From Roger of Wendover

In the presence of King Henry (the Second), the archbishop, bishops, abbots, priors, earls, barons, and nobles of the kingdom, a recognition was made at Clarendon (in 1164) concerning certain customs and liberties of the king's predecessors, which ought to be observed by all in the kingdom on account of the dissensions which often arise between the clergy and justices of our lord the king and the nobles of the king-

dom. Of these customs, then recognised, a portion is contained in the following :—

(i) If any dispute shall arise between laics, or between clerks and laics, or between clerks, let it be tried and decided in the court of our lord the king. . . .

(iii) Clerks accused of any crime shall be summoned by the king's justice into the king's court, to answer there for whatever the king's court shall determine they ought to answer there . . . and if the clerk shall confess or be convicted the Church for the future shall not protect him.

(iv) No archbishop, bishop, or other exalted person shall leave the kingdom without the king's licence. . . .

(vii) When an archbishopric, bishopric, abbacy, or priory of the king's domain shall be vacant, it shall be in the king's hand, and he shall receive from it all the revenues and proceeds as of domain. And when the time shall come for providing for that church, our lord the king shall recommend the best persons to that church, and the election shall be made in the king's chapel, with the king's consent, and the advice of the persons of the kingdom whom he shall have summoned for that purpose. And the person elected shall there do homage and fealty to our lord the king, as to his liege lord, of life and limb, and of his earthly honours saving his orders before he is consecrated.

This recognition concerning bad customs was sworn to by all present, who expressly promised by word of mouth that they would keep and observe them for ever.

From Walsingham's "HISTORIA ANGLICANA"

About the same time (about 1377) there arose in the University of Oxford a Northerner called Master John Wyclif, a doctor in divinity, who publicly held in the schools and elsewhere mistaken and heretical opinions, contrary to the holding of the Catholic Church, and especially bitter against the monks and other landed churchmen. And that he might the more carefully

glose his heresy and most speciously extend it, h gathered unto him workers of iniquity—to wit, friend and associates of one school abiding in Oxford and else where; and these wore russet gowns, for a token o greater perfection, and walked barefooted, to spread their heresies among the people and preach them openly and even publicly in their sermons.

And among other things these were the opinions with which they were primed: that the Church of Rome is not the head of all the Churches, more than any other single Church, and that no greater power was granted to Peter by Christ than to any other apostle; that the Pope has no greater power in the keys of the Church than any one else in the order of the priesthood; that temporal lords may, with law and approval, deprive a bankrupt Church of its property . . .; that the Gospel is a sufficient rule of life for any Christian, and that all the other rules of the Saints, to which divers men of religion conform, add no more perfection to the Gospel than doth whitewash to a wall. . . .

These and many other errors, to the great jeopardy of our Faith, were so spread by the said seducers that lords and magnates of the realm, and many of the people supported them in their preaching and favoured those who preached these errors; doubtless chiefly for this reason, because in their teaching they gave laymen power to rob churchmen of their temporal possessions.

But when these propositions and ravings had been exposed and examined before the Pope, with his own hand he condemned twenty-three of them as heretical and idle; and he sent bulls to the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Bishop of London that they should have the said John arrested and carefully examined on the aforesaid propositions. Whereupon the Archbishop . . . in the presence of the Duke of Lancaster and Lord Henry Percy, enjoined silence on him and all others with regard to these matters. . . . And so both himself and his followers were silent for some time. But at length, by the countenance of the temporal lords, they afterwards ventured to take up again and spread among

the laity the same opinions, and others much worse than those they spread before.

From an ACT OF PARLIAMENT OF 1534

Albeit the King's Majesty justly and rightfully is and ought to be the supreme head of the Church of England, and so is recognised by the clergy of this realm in their convocations; yet nevertheless for corroboration and confirmation thereof, and for increase of virtue in Christ's religion within this realm of England, and to repress all errors, heresies, and other enormities and abuses, be it enacted by authority of this present parliament that the King our Sovereign Lord, his heirs and successors, shall be taken, accepted and reputed the only supreme head on earth of the Church of England, and shall have and enjoy annexed and united to the imperial crown of this realm as well the title and style thereof, as all honours, dignities, privileges, authorities and profits to the said dignity of the same church belonging and appertaining; and that our said Sovereign Lord shall have full power and authority from time to time to visit, repress, reform, order, correct, restrain, and amend all errors, heresies, and enormities whatsoever they be.

From an ACT OF PARLIAMENT OF 1536

Forasmuch as notwithstanding the good and wholesome laws, ordinances, and statutes heretofore enacted . . . for the extirpation, absolution, and extinguishment out of this realm of the pretended power and usurped authority of the Bishop of Rome by some called the Pope . . . which did wrest God's holy word and testament a long season from the spiritual and true meaning thereof, to his worldly affections, as pomp, glory, avarice, ambition, and tyranny, covering and shadowing the same with his human and politic devices, traditions, and inventions set forth to promote and establish his dominion both upon the souls and also the bodies and goods of all Christian people . . .

whereby he did not only rob the King's Majesty, being the only supreme head of this his realm of England immediately under God, of his honour and pre-eminence due to him by the law of God, but spoiled this his realm yearly of innumerable treasure, and with the loss of the same deceived the King's loving and obedient subjects persuading to them by his laws, bulls and other deceitful means, such dreams, vanities, and fantasies as by the same many of them were seduced and conveyed into superstitious and erroneous opinions; so that the King's Majesty, the lords and commons in this realm being overwearied and fatigued with the experience of the infinite abominations and mischiefs proceeding of his impostures, and craftily colouring of his deceits to the great damage of souls, bodies, and goods were forced of necessity for the public weal of this realm to exclude that foreign pretended power, used and usurped within this realm; and to devise such remedies for their relief in the same as doth not only redound to the honour of God the high praise and advancement of the King's Majesty and of his realm, but also to the great and inestimable utility of the same.

1. *State the grounds on which disputes might arise between the King and the Church, and give your opinion as to the action of Henry II.*

2 *Summarise the views expressed in the passage concerning Wyclif. To what extent would the writer's opinions be shared by the various classes of Englishmen?*

3. *Discuss the value of the Acts of Supremacy to England generally.*

CHAPTER II

ENGLAND UNDER THE EARLY TUDORS

ALTHOUGH the Wars of the Roses had not greatly interfered with the English nation as a whole, and had not materially disturbed the progress and prosperity of the people, the accession of Henry VII. in 1485 was a welcome relief to the unrest which had prevailed throughout the country for so many years. His ideal was that of a thrifty and prosperous nation, wisely controlled by a despotic but fatherly monarch, and few were found to oppose him in his course. The industrial and commercial classes readily agreed with a system of government which ensured peace and liberty to follow their occupations undisturbed, and the already decaying feudal nobility had practically disappeared during the late struggles.

Henry himself set a good example by his economical administration, and by his support of trade and commerce. He wished to retain his personal power; for this purpose he desired to have direct control of the greatest possible amount of money; and so he encouraged commerce, which was rapidly becoming a source of considerable wealth. He made commercial treaties with foreign countries, including Flanders, which had been for a long time

the chief market for English wool. He saw that it was in every way to his advantage to get the support of those of his subjects who were concerned in industry and trade; for thereby he was able the more easily to destroy such opposition as came from the remnant of the old nobility.

In general we may say that the English nation at this time was prosperous, flourishing, and contented. But with the accession of Henry VIII., a very great change came over affairs. That despotic power which his father had built up, and which the new King was quite capable of maintaining and increasing, was used in no wise or benevolent fashion, but very greatly to the detriment of England.

In the first place, a selfish desire for personal honour and glory induced the king to take part in quarrels between foreign states; as the monarch was solely responsible for foreign policy, he was able to engage England in a number of altogether foolish, unnecessary, and very expensive military campaigns. The cost of these wars of course had to be borne ultimately by the nation; and thus at the very outset, Henry VIII. showed himself utterly regardless of the real interests of his subjects.

This King, although one of the strongest and ablest of English rulers, must be held directly responsible for much social misery, which was caused immediately by his extravagant habits and his despotic methods. In order to raise money, he confiscated to his own use the property of the monasteries.

These institutions owned an enormous amount

of land and wealth, and the sudden transference of all this property to the King caused far-reaching social changes. Much of the land was granted by the King to his friends, whose chief concern was to make themselves wealthy without any consideration for the people generally. The monasteries had to some extent relieved poverty, although often they may have relieved it unwisely, and even have fostered it at the same time; and the dissolution ultimately benefited nobody but the King and his courtiers, while it deprived many poor people of assistance. It appears to have been the original intention of the King to devote the monastic property to public purposes; but in the end only a small portion was used for the establishment of a few bishoprics and schools.

The King's persistent reckless expenditure led him to decide upon the confiscation of the property of the gilds. As we have already seen, these gilds were organisations for directing and controlling various industries in the towns. They had become close and jealous corporations, rather restricting than encouraging the expansion of industry; and the result was that many manufactures had been set up in villages, which were free from interference.

Owing to the restrictions, then, which these bodies sometimes placed on trade, they were not very popular with the general community, and they did not receive much sympathy. Henry's excuse was that the gilds spent some of their money for superstitious purposes; however this may be, part of their income had certainly been usefully spent in relieving their poorer members, their

widows and children. Henry died before he could complete the spoliation, but it was carried through in the next reign, and with the exception of London, which was powerful enough to have resisted forcibly, all the towns in the kingdom were deprived of their gild-property.

But these measures of robbery proved insufficient to fulfil the King's needs. He adopted the method of debasing the coinage; by this is meant that the *amount of silver in the coins was made less and less*, while their nominal value remained the same. In less than fifty years the amount of pure silver in a shilling was reduced to one-seventh of its former amount. The result was that prices rose considerably, while wages rose but slowly, and not in the same proportion, and industry was utterly disorganised.

We may say, then, that during the first half of the sixteenth century England passed from a state of comparative prosperity and content into one of misery and confusion. No doubt it was well in some respects for the nation to have a despotic monarch of great strength and ability to maintain order and direct affairs during a period of great change; but the recklessness and extravagance and unscrupulousness of Henry VIII. were the chief causes of immense wretchedness among the people. In the next chapter we shall show the nature of the economic changes which accompanied the events of his reign.

From a STATUTE OF 1536

Forasmuch as manifest sin and abominable living is daily used and committed among the little and small

abbeys, priories, and other religious houses of monks, canons, and nuns, where the congregation of such religious persons is under the number of twelve persons, whereby the governors of such religious houses destroy, consume, and utterly waste their churches, monasteries, farms, lands and tenements, as well as the ornaments of their churches and their goods and cattle. . . . In consideration whereof the King's Most Royal Majesty being supreme head on earth under God of the Church of England, having knowledge that these things be true, by the accounts of his late visitations as well as by sundry credible information, hath thought good that a plain declaration should be made of the premisses as well to the lords spiritual and temporal as to other his living subjects the commons in this present parliament assembled; whereupon the said lords and commons by a great deliberation finally be resolved that it is and shall be much to the pleasure of Almighty God and for the honour of this his realm that the possessions of such spiritual religious houses, now being spent, spoiled and wasted for increase and maintenance of sin, should be used and converted to better uses, and the unthrifty religious persons so spending the same to be compelled to reform their lives. And thereupon most humbly desire the King's Highness that it may be enacted by authority of this present parliament, that his Majesty shall have and enjoy to him and his heirs for ever all such monasteries and other religious houses of monks, canons, and nuns, which have not in lands and rents above the clear yearly value of two hundred pounds.

A Letter from the Commissioners to Thomas Cromwell (1536)

. . . We have surveyed the monastery or nunnery of Pollesworth in the county of Warwick, wherein is an abbess named Dame Alice Fitzherbert, of the age of sixty years, a very sad, discreet and religious woman, and hath been head and governour there twenty-seven years; and in the same house under her rule are twelve

virtuous and religious nuns, and of good conversation, as far as we can hear or perceive, as well by our examinations as by the open fame and report of all the country. . . . Wherefore in our opinions, if it might so stand with your lordship's pleasure, you might do a right good and meritorious deed to be a mediator to the King's Highness for the said house to stand and remain unsuppressed. And in the town of Pollesworth are forty-four tenements, and never a plough but one, the residue be artificers, labourers, and victuallers, and live in effect by the said house; and the town and nunnery standeth in a hard soil and barren ground, and to our estimation, if the nunnery be suppressed, the town will shortly after fall to ruin and decay, and the people therein to the number of six or seven score persons are not unlike to wander and to seek for their living.

From a LETTER FROM SIR THOMAS ELIOT TO CROMWELL

My most special good lord, I am constrained to offer unto your lordship all hearty love and service that a poor man may owe and bear to his good lord and approved friend, being, I thank God, ever sincere and without flattery or ill-dissimulation, I wishing unto your lordship the honourable desires of your heart, with the continual favour of God and your prince. My lord, I am animate to importune your good lordship with most hearty desires to continue my good lord in augmenting the King's good estimation of me; whereof I promise you before God, your lordship shall never have cause to repent. And where I perceive that you suspect that I favour not truly Holy Scripture, I would God that the King and you might see the most secret thoughts of my heart, surely ye should then perceive that I have in as much detestation as any man living all vain superstitions and other abuses of Christ's holy doctrine and laws; and I enjoy the King's godly proceeding to the due reformation of the said enormities as much as any of his Grace's subjects. I therefore most humbly desire you, my special good lord, so to bring me into the King's most noble remembrance, that of his most bounteous

liberality it may please his highness to reward me with some convenient portion of the lands of the suppressed monasteries, whereby I may be able to continue my life according to that honest degree whereunto his Grace hath called me. . . . And whatsoever portion of land I may attain by the King's gift, I promise to give to your lordship the first year's fruits, with mine assured and faithful heart and service.

From the "VENETIAN RELATION" (WRITTEN BY AN ITALIAN ABOUT 1500)

The English are, for the most part, both men and women of all ages, handsome, and well-proportioned; though not quite so much so, in my opinion, as it had been asserted to me, before your Magnificence went to that Kingdom; and I have understood from persons acquainted with these countries, that the Scotch are much handsomer; and that the English are great lovers of themselves, and of everything belonging to them; they think that there are no other men than themselves, and no other world but England, and whenever they see a handsome foreigner, they say that "he looks like an Englishmen," and that "it is a great pity he is not an Englishman"; and when they partake of any delicacy with a foreigner, they ask him, "whether such a thing is made in their country?" They take great pleasure in having a quantity of excellent victuals, and also in remaining a long time at table, being very sparing of wine when they drink it at their own expense. And this, it is said, they do in order to induce their other English guests to drink in moderation also, not considering it any inconvenience for three or four persons to drink out of the same glass. Few people keep wine in their own houses, but buy it for the most part at a tavern; and when they mean to drink a great deal they go to a tavern, and this is done not only by the men, but by ladies of distinction.

They all from time immemorial wear very fine clothes, and are extremely polite in their language; which, although it is as well as the Flemish derived from the

German, has lost its natural harshness, and is pleasing enough as they pronounce it. In addition to their civil speeches, they have the incredible courtesy of remaining with their heads uncovered with an admirable grace, whilst they talk to each other. They are gifted with good understandings, and are very good at everything they apply their minds to; few, however, excepting the clergy, are addicted to the study of letters; and this is the reason why anyone who has learning, though he may be a layman, is called by them a Clerk.

The common people apply themselves to trade, or to fishing, or else they practise navigation; and they are so diligent in mercantile pursuits that they do not fear to make contracts on usury.

They have a very fine reputation in arms; and from the great fear the French entertain of them, one must believe it to be justly acquired. But I have it on the best information that when the war is raging most furiously, they will seek for good eating, and all their other comforts, without thinking of what harm might befall them.

They have an antipathy to foreigners, and imagine that they never come into their island but to make themselves masters of it, and to usurp their goods; neither have they any sincere and solid friendships amongst themselves, insomuch, that they do not trust each other to discuss either public or private affairs together, in the confidential manner we do in Italy.

The want of affections in the English is strongly manifested towards their children; for after having kept them at home till they arrived at the age of seven or nine years at the utmost, they put them out, both males and females, to hard service in the houses of other people, binding them generally for another seven or nine years. And these are called apprentices, and during that time they perform all the most menial offices; and few are born who are exempted from this fate, for every one, however rich he may be, sends his children away to the houses of others, whilst he, in return, receives those of others into his own. And on inquiring their reason for

this severity, they answered that they did it in order that their children might learn better manners. But I, for my part, believe that they do it because they like to enjoy all their comforts themselves, and that they are better served by strangers than they would be by their own children.

1. *State carefully the arguments for and against the suppression of the monasteries.*

2. *Give your opinion as to the character of men like Sir Thomas Eliot.*

3. *In what respects have English people changed since* 1500, *assuming the Venetian Relation to be fairly accurate*

CHAPTER III

SOCIAL CHANGES IN THE EARLY SIXTEENTH CENTURY

THE sixteenth century was a period of transition in every department of national life. A new spirit was expressing itself in the revival of learning, in greater literary activity, in a keener desire for progress and the accumulation of wealth, in religious reforms, and in a general breaking-up of the old mediæval system of things; and in this transition was involved an enormous change in the social conditions of the English nation. We have seen that the selfish and short-sighted policy of Henry VIII. resulted in the impoverishment of large numbers of the poorer classes; the dissolution of the monasteries, the debasement of the coinage, and the confiscation of the gild-lands, accompanied by a rise in prices, all assisted in producing this result, and at the same time the nobility and land-owning classes became much more wealthy, and merchants prospered exceedingly.

An important factor in effecting this change was the growing practice of landowners to use their lands for the production of wool. This movement had been proceeding for some time, and during the reign of Henry VIII. it reached its climax.

Every one thought that "the foot of the sheep would turn sand into gold," and the evil effects of the change were perfectly apparent. Only a few shepherds were needed on land which had formerly employed many labourers, and the resulting vagrancy and unemployment were a source of great concern to the King and his ministers. But their efforts in passing laws to prevent the ill effects of the extension of sheep-farming were completely counterbalanced by the action of the King himself in suppressing the monasteries and handing over a large part of their estates to greedy and unscrupulous landlords, many of them men of the merchant class. These new landlords meant to derive the greatest possible wealth from their land, and had no friendly feeling towards their tenants or the labourers. Further, disregarding the rights of the poor to the use of land which had been for centuries at the disposal of the common people, these profit-seekers enclosed the common lands and added them to their sheep-farms. This practice, by robbing the poor of their only grazing land, added greatly to their distress, and they had no effective means of redress. The landowners, too, raised the rents to their tenant-farmers, making it almost impossible for them to exist on their farms at all. The smaller tenants, who could not resist, were often ruthlessly turned out of their holdings, and went to swell the numbers of unemployed and destitute, many of whom drifted into the towns.

If Henry VIII. was not moved by the distress brought about by his actions, at any rate he was

concerned with the danger which threatened his kingdom by the weakening of its powers of defence owing to the depopulation of the country. He caused laws to be passed restricting sheep-farming and encouraging husbandry; but these laws were generally disobeyed.

The social upheaval of this period was the inevitable result of the despotic government of the King and the selfish ambitions of the new nobility. The greatest misery was, of course, experienced during the actual course of the change; when the people had adapted themselves to the new conditions there was less distress, but pauperism became permanently established and provision had to be made for it by legislation

During the reigns of Edward VI. and Mary the condition of the people was extremely wretched. Vagrancy and crime increased, and the government could or would do nothing to mend matters. The noblemen who formed the council which governed for the young King Edward were concerned in watching their own interests as landlords, and were certainly not the persons to bring about any relief to the national misery. At length many of the unemployed began to express their feelings by riots and rebellions. The most serious of these occurred in 1549 in Norfolk, a county which had been extensively enclosed for sheep-farms. It was led by Ket, a wealthy tanner, and the chief demand of the insurgents was the complete abolition of enclosures. This was a great effort, but, like the royal legislation, it was ineffective, for although the government was to some extent sympathetic,

the rising had to be suppressed, and the poorer classes were compelled to accept their fate.

Important

From MORE'S "UTOPIA"

Your sheep that were wont to be so meek and tame, and so small eaters, now, as I hear say, be become so great devourers and so wild, that they eat up and swallow down the very men themselves. They consume, devour, and destroy whole fields, houses, and cities. For look in what parts of the realm doth grow the finest and therefore the dearest wool, there noblemen and gentlemen, yea and certain abbots, holy men, no doubt, not contenting themselves with the yearly revenues and profits, that were wont to grow to their forefathers and predecessors of their lands, nor being content that they live in rest and pleasure nothing profiting, yea much annoying the weal public, leave no ground for tillage; they enclose all into pastures; they throw down houses; they pluck down towns, and leave nothing standing, but only the church to be made a sheep-house. And as though you lost no small quantity of ground by forests, chases, lands, and parks, these good holy men turn all dwelling-places and all glebe land into desolation and wilderness. Therefore that one covetous and insatiable cormorant and very plague of his native country may compass about and enclose many thousand acres of ground together within one pale or hedge, the husbandmen be thrust out of their own, or else either by deceit or fraud, or by violent oppression they be put besides it, or by wrongs and injuries they be so wearied, that they be compelled to sell all; by one means therefore, or another, either by hook or crook, they must needs depart away, poor, innocent, wretched fools, men, women, husbands, wives, fatherless children, widows, woeful mothers, with their young babes, and their whole household, small in substance, and much in number, as husbandry requireth many hands. Away they trudge, I say, out of their known and accustomed houses, finding no place to rest in. All their household

stuff, which is very little worth, though it might well abide the sale; yet being suddenly thrust out, they be constrained to sell it for a thing of nought. And when they have wandered abroad till that be spent, what can they then else do but steal, and they justly pardy be hanged, or else go about a-begging And then also they be cast in prison as vagabonds, because they go about and work not; whom no man will set to work, though they never so willingly proffer themselves thereto. For one shepherd or herdman is enough to eat up that ground with cattle, to the occupying whereof about husbandry many hands were requisite.

A Law Concerning Sheep (1534)

. . As it is thought by the King's most humble and loving subjects, that one of the greatest occasions that moveth and provoketh these greedy and covetous people so to accumulate and keep in their hands such great portions and parts of the grounds and lands of this realm from the occupying of the poor husbandmen, and so to use it in pasturage, and not tillage, is only the great profit that cometh of sheep, which now be come to a few persons' hands of this realm, in respect of the whole number of the King's subjects, that some have four and twenty thousand, some twenty thousand, some ten thousand, some more, some less; by the which a good sheep for victual, that was accustomed to be sold for two shillings four pence, or three shillings at the most, is now sold for six shillings, or five shillings, or four shillings at the least; and a stone of clothing wool, that in some shires of this realm was accustomed to be sold for eighteen pence or twenty pence, is now sold for four shillings, or three shillings four pence at the least; and in some countries where it hath been sold for two shillings four pence, or two shillings eight pence, or three shillings at the most, it is now sold for five shillings, or four shillings eight pence at the least, and so are raised in every part of the realm; which things, thus used, be principally to the high displeasure of Almighty God, to the decay of the hospitality of this realm, to the

diminishing of the King's people, and to the let of the cloth-making, whereby many poor people have been accustomed to be set on work; and in conclusion, if remedy be not found, it may turn to the utter destruction and desolation of this realm, which God defend; it may therefore please the King's Highness, of his most gracious and godly disposition, and the lords spiritual and temporal, of their goodness and charity, with the assent of the commons, in the present parliament assembled, to ordain and enact by the authority of the same: That no person or persons from the feast of Saint Michael the archangel, which shall be in the year of our Lord 1535, shall keep, occupy, or have in his possession, in his own proper lands, nor in the possession, lands or grounds of any other which he shall have or occupy in farm, nor otherwise have of his own proper cattle, in use, possession, or property, by any manner of means, fraud, craft, or covin, above the number of two thousand sheep at one time, within any part of this realm, of all sorts and kinds. . . .

From a SUPPLICATION OF THE POOR COMMONS (1546)

. . . Most dread sovereign . . . restore to the poor their due portion, which they trusted to have received when they saw your Highness turn out the other sturdy beggars. But alas! they failed of their expectation and are now in more penury than ever they were. For, although the sturdy beggars got all the devotion of the good charitable people from them, yet had the poor impotent creatures some relief of their scraps, whereas now they have nothing. Then had they hospitals and almshouses to be lodged in, but now they lie and starve in the streets. Then was their number great, but now much greater. And no marvel, for there is instead of these sturdy beggars crept in a sturdy sort of extortioners. These men cease not to oppress us, your Highness' poor commons, in such sort that many thousands of us, who herebefore lived honestly upon our sore labour and travail, bringing up our children in the exercise of honest labour, are now constrained some

to beg, some to borrow, and some to rob and steal, to get food for us and our poor wives and children. And that which is not likely to grow to inconvenience, we are constrained to suffer our children to spend the flower of their youth in idleness, bringing them up either to bear wallets, or else, if they be sturdy, to stuff prisons and garnish gallows trees. For such of us as have no possessions left to us by our predecessors can get now no farm, tenement, or cottage, at these men's hands, without we pay into them more than we are able to make. Yea, this was tolerable, so long as, after this extreme exaction, we were not for the residue of our years oppressed with much greater rents than hath of ancient time been paid for the same grounds; for then a man might within a few years be able to recover his fine and afterwards live honestly by his labour. But now these extortioners have so improved their lands that they make of five nobles rent five pound; yea, not content with this oppression within their own inheritance, they buy at your Highness' hand such abbey lands as you appoint to be sold; and they make us, your poor commons, so in doubt of their threatenings, that we dare do none other but bring into their courts our copies taken of the agreements of the late dissolved monasteries, and confirmed by your High Court of Parliament, and they make us believe that, by the virtue of your Highness' sale, all our former writings are void and of none effect. . . . So that we, your poor commons, which have no grounds, nor are able to take any at these extortioners' hands, can find no way to set our children on work, no, though we proffer them for meat and drink and poor clothes to cover their bodies. Help us, merciful Prince, in this extremity; suffer not the hope of so noble a realm utterly to perish, through the insatiable desire of the possessioners. Remember that you shall not leave this kingdom to a stranger, but to that child of great towardness our most natural Prince Edward; employ your study to leave him a commonweal to govern, and not an island of brute beasts, amongst whom the strongest devour the weakest. . . .

From a Tract "THE COMMON WEAL OF THIS REALM OF ENGLAND" (1549)

[The Husbandman says:] " . . . These enclosures do undo us all, for they make us pay dearer for our land that we occupy, and cause that we can have no land in manner for our money to put to tillage; all is taken up for pastures, either for sheep or for grazing of cattle. So that I have known of late a dozen ploughs, within less compass than six miles about me, laid down within these six years; and where forty persons had their livings, now one man and his shepherd hath all. . . ."

[The Merchant says:] " . . . Not only the good towns are decayed sore in their houses, streets, and other buildings, but also in the country in their highways and bridges; for such poverty reigneth everywhere that few men have so much to spare that they may give anything to the reparation of such ways and bridges. . . . Then all kind of victual are as dear or dearer again, and nó cause for it as far as I can perceive; for I never saw more plenty of corn, grass, and cattle of all sorts than we have at this present. . . ."

[The Knight says.] "Since ye have plenty of all things of corn and cattle as ye say, then it should not seem this dearth should be caused by these enclosures; for it is not by scarceness of corn that we have this dearth; it cannot be the occasion of the dearth of cattle, for enclosures is the thing that nourisheth most of any other. . . . But all sorts of artificers may save themselves well; for as much as all things are dearer than they were, so much do you arise in the price of your wares and occupations that you sell again; but we have nothing to sell whereby we might advance the price thereof."

[Husbandman:] " Yes, you raise the price of your lands, and you take farms also and pastures into your hands, which were wont to be poor men's livings. . . . Those sheep are the cause of all these mischiefs, for they have driven husbandry out of the country. . . . "

[Knight:] " Experience should seem plainly to prove

that enclosures should be profitable, and not hurtful to the common weal, for we see that counties where most enclosures be, are most wealthy, as Essex, Kent, Devonshire, and such. And I heard a civilian once say, that it was taken for a maxim in his law, this saying, that what is possessed of many in common is neglected of all; and experience showeth that tenants in common be not such good husbandmen, as when every man hath his part separately."

[Doctor:] . . . With the alteration of the coin began this dearth; "and as the coin appeared, so rose the price of things withal. And this to be true, the few pieces of old coin yet remaining testifieth; for ye shall have, for any of the said coin, as much of any ware either inward or outward as much as ever was wont to be had for the same; and so as the measure is made less there goeth some to make up the tale. And because this riseth not together at all men's hands, therefore some hath great loss, and some other great gains thereby. And thus, to conclude, I think this alteration of the coin to be the first original cause that strangers first sell their wares dearer to us; and that makes all farmers and tenants, that reareth any commodity, again to sell the dearer; the dearth thereof makes the gentlemen to raise their rents, and to take farms into their hands for the better provision, and consequently to enclose more grounds."

1. *Carefully enumerate all the evils which are said to have resulted from the extension of sheep-farming.*

2. *How far do you agree with the argument of the Knight in the passage quoted above?*

3. *What causes other than enclosures seem to have been responsible for social discontent?*

CHAPTER IV

ENGLAND UNDER ELIZABETH

BROADLY speaking, we may say that during the latter half of the sixteenth century the condition of the mass of the population of England slightly improved. The people gradually adapted themselves to the economic changes, and prolonged peace was a great blessing to the nation. The landowners were rich, the merchants were prosperous, manufactures increased, and the labouring classes were slowly bettering their condition. But they were by no means well off; and there was a considerable amount of pauperism throughout the land. This means that, owing to the economic tendency of affairs, many people could not find work to do for their livelihood, and many were driven into the class of "sturdy vagabonds." Moreover, since the suppressing of the monasteries and gilds, there was very little effective relief for those who were unable to work. This growth of pauperism had been greatly furthered by the misgovernment of Henry VIII., although this was not the sole cause; and measures for dealing with the trouble were constantly being proposed. These we shall notice separately.

Agriculture, which of course remained the prin-

cipal industry, improved in many respects. Methods of cultivation were altered, and the land yielded a greater return. The balance was once more restored between sheep-farming and tillage, the high prices of wool declined, and the value of corn rose. Thus arable farming was encouraged, and agricultural labourers were more sure of employment. But laws were passed by which the wages of labourers were fixed by justices, and they were usually kept at a rather low level, in spite of the continued rise in the price of the necessaries of life. The landowners and farmers reaped the benefit of this, and their wealth increased greatly.

Elizabeth's government was anxious to encourage and organise national industries. Much thought and care were spent on this matter, and trade and manufactures made considerable strides. The importation of manufactured goods was discouraged, and monopolies were granted with the intention of fostering new industries. These monopolies were very liable to abuse by the Crown, and had to be given up; but at first it is possible that persons were encouraged to establish new industries by the prospect of exclusive rights. Companies were formed to take the place of the old gilds, and they had the advantage of being authorised by the government instead of by the towns.

But the greatest help to manufactures came from the immigration of Protestant refugees from Flanders and France. Owing to the disturbed condition of these countries, caused by religious troubles, many workpeople sought refuge in England where these difficulties had been settled by the

establishment of the Protestant Church of England. The Flemish Protestants were among the most skilful manufacturers in Europe, and they brought with them to England their means of livelihood. In this way many manufactures were introduced into this country, and others were improved. English workpeople were at first naturally jealous of the newcomers, but religious sympathy and the obvious value of their work caused them to be welcomed by the nation as a whole. Among the manufactures introduced by the Flemish immigrants were lace-making, weaving fine cloths, silk-weaving, clock-making, and the making of thread.

While these new industries were being built up the old woollen manufacture was being maintained. The work was passing more and more into the control of capitalists, called clothiers, who gave out the work to the artisans. The workpeople in country districts were less restricted than those in towns, and there was considerable rivalry. Attempts were made to confine the woollen manufacture, as well as others, to particular towns, in the hope, perhaps, that more effective supervision could be maintained over the quality of the work, but these efforts to secure monopolies of this kind were generally unsuccessful.

All this progress in industry and manufacture would have been quite impossible without the steadying effect of the reform of the currency, or coinage, which was one of the first acts of Elizabeth's government. There was not the slightest chance of a revival of prosperity so long as it was impossible to know the real value of coins, and so long as

there was a prospect of further debased issues taking place. Elizabeth's council called in the whole currency, and issued a new coinage altogether. This great and useful reform was successfully effected, and advantage could be taken of the enormous increase in the amount of silver which was beginning to prevail on account of the large supplies from America.

This influx of silver into Europe had some important results. Most of it, of course, went in the first place to Spain, which became for a time the richest country in the world. But wealth in this form could not be kept long in such a country as Spain, and it was gradually diffused through other countries. The effect, in England as elsewhere, was that prices rose and industry was stimulated. Wealth could more easily be stored and applied to any manufacture or trade as opportunity offered. The advantage, as usual, was with the middle and upper classes. We have seen that prices rose when the coinage was debased, and that wages did not enjoy a corresponding increase; so when the stock of silver grew, and more money was required for the purchase of necessaries of life, wages rose very slowly indeed.

The prosperity of the middle and upper classes is sufficiently indicated by the higher standard of comfort which prevailed at the close of Elizabeth's reign. Houses of brick and stone, with chimneys and glass windows, furnished comfortably and elegantly, became common. Dress was finer and gayer, and new luxuries were continually being introduced from abroad. England at this time

was a richer and more prosperous nation than it had ever been before, except so far as the poorest class was concerned.

From SIR THOMAS SMITH'S "COMMONWEALTH OF ENGLAND" (1589)

Gentlemen be those whom their blood and race doth make noble and known. Ordinarily the king doth only make knights and create barons or higher degrees, for as for gentlemen they be made good cheap in England. For whosoever studieth the laws of the realm, who studieth in the universities, who professeth liberal sciences, and to be short, who can live idly and without manual labour, he shall be called master, and be taken for a gentleman.

Those whom we call yeomen, next unto the nobility, knights, and squires, have the greatest charge and doings in the commonwealth . . . This sort of people confess themselves to be no gentlemen, and yet they have a certain pre-eminence and more estimation than labourers and artificers, and commonly live wealthily. . . . These be, for the most part, farmers unto gentlemen, and by these means do come to such wealth that they are able and daily do buy the lands of unthrifty gentlemen.

The class of day labourers, poor husbandmen, yea merchants or retailers which have no free land, copyholders and all artificers . . . these have no voice nor authority in our commonwealth, and no account is made of them, but only to be ruled.

From a REPORT OF ENGLAND TO THE VENETIAN SENATE, BY SORANZO (1554)

The air of England is thick, so it often generates clouds, wind, and rain, but in calm weather the climate is so temperate that the extremes of heat and cold are rarely felt, and never last long, so that persons clad in fur may be seen all the year round. They have some little plague in England well nigh every year, for which

they are not accustomed to make sanitary provisions, as it does not usually make great progress; the cases for the most part occur among the lower classes, as if their dissolute mode of life impaired their constitutions. . . .

The soil, especially in England proper, produces wheat, oats, and barley, in such plenty that they have usually enough for their own consumption, but were they to work more diligently, and with greater skill, and bring the soil into higher cultivation, England might supply grain for exportation, but they do not attend much to this, so that they sometimes need assistance both from Flanders and Denmark, and occasionally from France likewise. They grow no other sort of grain, and their only lentils are beans and peas.

The country is almost all level, with few rivers and springs, and such hills as they have are not very high, and one advantage of the climate is that the grass remains green at all seasons, affording excellent pasturage for animals, especially sheep, of which there is an incredible number, supplying that wool which is in such universal repute under the name of "Frankish," the French king having been the first to bring it into Italy. Great part of this wool is manufactured in England where cloths and kerseys of various sorts are wrought, which amount annually to 150,000 pieces of cloths of all sorts and 150,000 pieces of kersey, the rest of the wool being exported and taken usually to Calais on account of the staplers, who then sell it on the spot, and have the monopoly of the wool exports from England, though occasionally export-permits are conceded by favour to other persons, though the staplers do their utmost to prevent it. The quantity of unwrought wool exported is said to amount to about 2000 tons [annually]; they also export hides to the value of 500,000 ducats. In Cornwall they have lead and tin mines, from which they extract metal in great quantity, and of such good quality that the like is not to be found elsewhere.

In the north towards Scotland they find a certain sort

of earth well nigh mineral, and which burns like charcoal, and is extensively used, especially by blacksmiths, and but for a certain bad odour which it leaves it would be yet more employed, as it gives great heat and costs little.

The principal cities of the kingdom are London and York, but London is the most noble, both on account of its being the royal residence, and because the river Thames runs through it, very much to the convenience and profit of the inhabitants, as it ebbs and flows every six hours like the sea, scarcely ever causing inundation or any extraordinary floods; and up to London Bridge it is navigable for ships of 400 butts burden, of which a great plenty arrive with every sort of merchandise. This bridge connects the city with the borough, and is built of stone with twenty arches, and shops on both sides. On the banks of the river there are many large palaces, making a very fine show, but the city is much disfigured by the ruins of a multitude of churches and monasteries belonging heretofore to friars and nuns. It has a dense population, said to number 180,000 souls; and is beyond measure commercial, the merchants of the entire kingdom flocking thither, as, by a privilege conceded to the citizens of London, from them alone can they purchase merchandise, so they soon became very wealthy; and the same privileges placed in their hands the government of the city of London, which is divided into 24 trades or crafts, each of which elects a certain individual, styled alderman, the election being made solely in the persons of those who are considered the most wealthy, and the office is for life; the which aldermen, after assembling these trades, create annually a person as their head for the current year entitled Mayor.

The nobility, save such as are employed at Court, do not habitually reside in the cities, but in their own country mansions, where they keep up very grand establishments, both with regard to the great abundance of eatables consumed by them, as also by reason of their numerous attendants, in which they exceed all other nations, so that the Earl of Pembroke has upwards of

1000 clad in his own livery. In these their country residences they occupy themselves with hunting of every description, and whatever else can amuse or divert them; so that they seem wholly intent on leading a joyous existence.

The English do not delight much either in military pursuits or literature, which last, most especially by the nobility, is not held in much account, and they have scarcely any opportunity for occupying themselves with the former, save in time of war, and when that is ended they think no more about them, but in battle they show much courage and great presence of mind in danger, but they require to be largely supplied with victuals; so it is evident that they cannot endure much fatigue. . . .

From HARRISON'S "DESCRIPTION OF ENGLAND"

In this place also are our merchants to be installed as amongst the citizens, whose number is so increased in these our days that their only maintenance is the cause of the exceeding prices of foreign wares, which otherwise, when every nation was permitted to bring in her own commodities, were far better, cheaper, and more plentifully to be had. I do not deny but that the navy of the land is in part maintained by their traffic, and so are the high prices of wares kept up, now they have gotten the only sale of things upon pretence of better furtherance of the commonwealth into their own hands; whereas in times past, when foreign ships were suffered to come in, we had sugar for fourpence a pound, that now is well worth half a crown, and raisins or currants for a penny that are now holden at sixpence. . . . The wares that they carry out of the realm are for the most part broad cloths and kerseys of all colours, likewise cottons, friezes, rugs, tin, wool, our best beer, baize, lead, skins, etc.; which, being shipped at sundry ports of our coasts, are borne from thence into all quarters of the world, and there either exchanged for other wares or ready money, to the great gain and commodity of our merchants.

From D'Ewes' Journal of the House of Commons (1601)

Mr. Francis Bacon said . . . For the Prerogative Royal of the Prince, for my own part I ever allowed of it, and it is such as I hope shall never be discussed. The Queen, as she is our Sovereign, hath both an enlarging and restraining power. For by her Prerogative she may first set at liberty things restrained by Statute Law or otherwise; and secondly, by her Prerogative she may restrain things which be at liberty. . . . If any man out of his own wit, industry, or endeavour, finds out anything beneficial for the commonwealth, or brings in any new invention which every subject of this kingdom may use; yet in regard of his pains therein her Majesty perhaps is pleased to grant him a privilege to use the same only by himself or his deputies for a certain time. This is one kind of Monopoly. Sometimes there is a glut of things when they be in excessive quantity, as perhaps of corn, and her Majesty gives licence of transportation to one man; this is another kind of monopoly. Sometimes there is a scarcity or a small quantity, and the like is granted also. . . . The use hath ever been to humble ourselves unto her Majesty, and by Petition desire to have our grievances remedied, especially when the remedy toucheth her so nigh on the point of Prerogative. I say and say again, that we ought not to deal, to judge or meddle with her Majesty's Prerogative. . . .

Mr. Francis Moore said . . . I cannot utter with my tongue or conceive with my heart the great grievances that the town and country, for which I serve, suffereth by some of these monopolies. It bringeth the general profit into a private hand, and the end of all is beggary and bondage to the subjects. . . . To what purpose is it to do anything by Act of Parliament, when the Queen will undo the same by her Prerogative? Out of the spirit of humiliation, Mr. Speaker, I do speak it, there is no act of hers that hath been or is more derogatory to her own Majesty, more odious to the subject, more

dangerous to the commonwealth, than the granting of these monopolies.

Mr. Martin said, I do speak for a town that grieves and pines, for a country that groaneth and languisheth under the burthen of monstrous and unconscionable substitutes to the monopolitans of starch, tin, fish, cloth, oil, vinegar, salt, and I know not what. The principallest commodities both of my town and country are engrossed into the hand of those blood-suckers of the commonwealth. If a body, Mr. Speaker, being let blood, be left still languishing without any remedy, how can the good estate of that body long remain? Such is the estate of my town and country, the traffic is taken away, the inward and private commodities are taken away, and dare not be used without the licence of these monopolitans. If these blood-suckers be still let alone to suck up the best commodities which the earth hath given us, what shall become of us, from whom the fruits of our own soil and the commodities of our own labour, which with the sweat of our brows even up to the knees in mire and dirt we have laboured for, shall be taken by warrant of supreme authority, which the poor subjects dare not gainsay.

Sir Walter Raleigh said, I am urged to speak in two respects: the one, because I find myself touched in particular; the other, that I take some imputation of slander to be offered unto her Majesty. I mean by the gentleman who mentioned tin, for that being one of the principal commodities of this kingdom, and being in Cornwall, it hath ever, so long as there were any, belonged to the Dukes of Cornwall, and they had special patents of privilege. It pleased her Majesty freely to bestow upon me that privilege; and I can sufficiently inform the House of the state thereof. . . . Before the granting of my patent, whether tin were but of seventeen shillings and so upward to fifty shillings a hundred, yet the poor workmen never had above two shillings the week; but since my patent, whoever will work, may; and be tin at what price soever, they have four shillings a week truly paid. There is no poor that will work there,

but may, and have that wages. Notwithstanding, if all others may be repealed, I will give my consent as freely to the cancelling of this, as any member of this House.

1. *Discuss those points in Soranzo's Report which seem to you to be specially interesting, and criticise any statements which may appear doubtful.*

2. *Give your opinion as to the wisdom of the policy mentioned by Harrison in the passage given above.*

3. *What inferences can you make from the report of the debate on monopolies?*

CHAPTER V

THE POOR LAW

In previous chapters we have been concerned with the occupations and activities of the various classes of people in England, and have learnt something of the conditions in which the work of the country was carried on. But it must not be forgotten that there were always people who did not work, and the means of subsistence for these had to be provided somehow. We may say that there are *three kinds of such persons*: those who are willing to work, and can find no suitable employment; those who are unable to work at all through age or infirmity; and those who are unwilling to work, the idle rogues and vagabonds of society. The provision of some sort of employment, relief, or punishment, whichever is required, has always been one of the most troublesome tasks of our legislators; and during the sixteenth century Parliament was very active in passing measures to deal with this question of pauperism.

The problem had already been dealt with to some extent. The mediæval principle was that the impotent poor, that is, the poor who could not be expected to work, owing to age or sickness, ought to be relieved by charity. Large sums of

money had been entrusted to the Church for the purpose of helping this unfortunate class, and generally such relief was readily given in deserving cases. But the class of "sturdy vagabonds" presented more difficulty; the general idea was that they ought to be vigorously suppressed, and all the earlier laws dealing with pauperism contained some provision for punishment, more or less severe, for those who preferred to obtain their living by theft or begging rather than by honest work; and as early as the reign of Richard II. a system of poor relief had been commenced, in which both the impotent poor and the vagabonds were dealt with according to the prevalent ideas on the subject.

The other class which has been mentioned—those who could find no work to do—did not seem to enter into the calculations of the statesmen of the Middle Ages. In point of fact, such a class was not a large one; until the great economic changes of the Tudor period we hear very little about unemployment; able-bodied men could almost always find some occupation to follow, even if it was not always a congenial one; and unemployment was invariably set down to idleness

But during the sixteenth century the number of vagabonds increased enormously, and it is impossible to believe that the increase was due entirely to an epidemic of laziness. Much misery was attributed to the enclosures; we have seen that Sir Thomas More regarded this practice as responsible for an enormous amount of distress and poverty, and it was the main cause of much of the

discontent which showed itself in Ket's rebellion. But one result of the enclosures was to stimulate industry in other directions, and part of the poverty which they caused was no doubt removed by the transference of agricultural labour to the other industries. At the same time it is clear that the depressing and disheartening effect of the loss of his accustomed occupation very often drove the peasant to vagabondage, and he gradually drifted into idleness, and resorted to all manner of deceit and wickedness, in order to obtain relief from the monasteries, or from benevolent individuals.

It is important to notice the connection of the monasteries with the question of the poor. These institutions had fulfilled a valuable function in giving charitable aid to the deserving poor; but with the increase in the number of vagabonds they had to face a serious difficulty. It was often very hard to detect the tricks and devices of the professional beggars, and by distributing relief to such people they were really encouraging the very evil which it was so desirable to remove. The suppression of the monasteries, which, as we have seen, was brought about by Henry VIII, chiefly from selfish motives, deprived many sturdy beggars of the means of leading a life of idleness, but it also meant starvation to many aged and infirm and helpless people. But whatever effect the dissolution may have had upon the condition of the poor, a most important Act was passed in 1536, three years before the suppression of the larger monasteries; the great evils with which this law dealt, at any rate, were not the result of their dissolution.

By this statute, provision was made for the employment of the able-bodied and for the relief of the impotent, through the officials of the towns and villages. Alms were to be collected by the churchwardens; sturdy beggars were to be helped to their proper home after they had been whipped; the impotent were not allowed to beg; poor children were placed in service, and the giving of private alms was forbidden.

This law was the foundation on which the whole structure of the Poor Law was afterwards built. There were two points which had to receive further attention; one was the necessity for providing a regular and certain sum of money, which should be available for poor relief; this principle of compulsory maintenance of the poor was adopted very slowly and very unwillingly, after many unsuccessful attempts had been made to get along without it. But at last it was plain that voluntary almsgiving was insufficient, and the "overseers" were instructed to fix and collect a tax on all householders in the various parishes throughout the country. The other matter in regard to which the Act of 1536 needed improvement was the provision of work for the able-bodied. At the time of the passing of the Act, this seems to have been left to the ingenuity of the parish officials; but subsequent acts provided for the supply of stores of flax, hemp, and wool, on which pauper labour might be set to work. For those who refused this method of assistance, "houses of correction" were established in which idle rogues were detained and punished.

Finally, as a result of many experiments and

extremely careful and thorough consideration of all the difficulties, the Poor Law of 1601 was passed, combining all the previous acts into one measure, and improving the details of their working. We find in it the compulsory rate, which every householder had to pay, and which was managed by the overseers of the poor; we have the provision for employment of the unemployed by the supply of materials; the children of paupers were to be apprenticed to some trade; and it was further enacted that parents or children must maintain their relations. So thoroughly were these provisions made, and so completely were they worked out, that they continued practically unchanged for over two hundred years.

From a STATUTE OF 1503

Forasmuch as the King's Grace most entirely desireth amongst all earthly things the prosperity and restfulness of this his land and his subjects of the same, considering the great charges that shall grow to his subjects for bringing of vagabonds to the gaols, His Highness will by authority of this his present parliament it be ordained and enacted that where such misdoers should be by examination committed to the common gaol there to remain, that the sherrifs, mayors, and all other governors and officers of cities, boroughs, and other places, within three days after this Act is proclaimed, make due search and take all such vagabonds, idle people, and suspect persons, and then so taken to set in stocks there to remain by the space of one day and one night, and there to have no other sustenance but bread and water; and after the said day and night passed, to be had out and set at large, and then to avoid the town or place where they be taken, into such city or place where they

were born, or else to the place where they last made their abode by the space of three years, and that as hastily as they conveniently may. . . .

From a STATUTE OF 1535

Forasmuch as it was not provided in the Act (of 1531) how and in what wise the poor people and sturdy vagabonds should be ordered at their coming into their own countries, nor how the inhabitants of every hundred should be charged for the relief of the same poor people, nor yet for the setting and keeping in work and labour of the aforesaid valiant vagabonds, it is now ordained . . . that all mayors, aldermen . . . and all other head officers of every city and parish of this realm, at the coming thither of such poor creature or sturdy vagabond, shall most charitably receive the same and . . . shall not only succour all and every of the same poor people by way of voluntary and charitable alms . . . but also to cause all the same sturdy vagabonds and valiant beggars to be set and kept to continual labour, in such wise as by their labours they may get their own living with the continual labour of their hands. . . . It is ordained . . . that all the mayors and head officers of every town and the churchwardens and two others of every parish of this realm shall in good and charitable wise take such discreet and convenient order, by gathering and procuring of such charitable and voluntary alms of the good Christian people within the same, with boxes every Sunday, holy day, and other festival day, or otherwise among themselves, in such good and discreet wise as the poor, impotent, lame, feeble, sick, and diseased people, not being able to work, may be holpen and relieved, so that in no wise they may be suffered to go openly in begging; and that such as be lusty or having their limbs strong enough to labour may be kept in continual labour, whereby every one of them may get their own substance and living with their own hands.

From D'Ewes' Journal of the House of Commons (1571)

The Bill against vagabonds was read the first time; after which ensued divers speeches, which is not commonly used until after the second reading. . . .

Mr. Sands endeavoured to prove this law for beggars to be over sharp and bloody, standing much on the care which is to be had for the poor; saying that it might be possible with some travail by the Justices to relieve every man at his own house, and to stay them from wandering. Mr. Treasurer talked to this effect, that he would have a Bridewell in every town, and every tippler in the county to yield twelve pence yearly to the maintenance thereof.

Mr. Wilson argued thus: that the poor of necessity we must have, for so Christ hath said, until his latter coming; and as that is true, so said he also that beggars by God's word might not be among his people. His experience he showed through the greatest part of Christendom, concluding that such looseness and lewdness was nowhere, as here; he said it was no charity to give to one that we know not, being a stranger.

From a Statute of 1601

Be it enacted . . . that the churchwardens of every parish, and four, three, or two substantial householders . . . shall be called Overseers of the Poor of the same parish; and they shall take order from time to time for setting to work of the children of all such whose parents shall not by the said Overseers be thought able to keep and maintain their children; and also for setting to work all persons having no means to maintain them; also to raise, weekly or otherwise, by taxation of every inhabitant and of every occupier . . . a convenient stock of flax, hemp, wool, thread, iron, and the necessary ware and stuff to set the poor on work; and also competent sums of money for and towards the necessary relief of the lame, impotent, old, blind, and such other among

them being poor and not able to work, and also for the putting out of such children to be apprentices, to be gathered out of the same parish, according to the ability of the same parish. . . .

And to the intent that necessary places of habitation may more conveniently be provided for such poor, impotent people, be it enacted that it shall and may be lawful for the said churchwardens and overseers, by the leave of the Lord of the Manor . . . to erect at the general charges of the parish . . . convenient houses of dwelling for the said impotent poor, and also to place inmates or more families than one in one cottage or house. . . .

And be it further enacted, that the father and grandfather, and the mother and grandmother, and the children of every poor, old, blind, lame, or impotent person, or other poor person not able to work, being of a sufficient ability, shall at their own charges relieve and maintain every such poor person . . . upon pain that every one of them shall forfeit twenty shillings for every month which they shall fail therein.

1. *Trace carefully the course of events which resulted in the passing of the Act of* 1601.

2. *In what ways do the previous laws seem to be defective?*

CHAPTER VI

THE EXPANSION OF TRADE

THE sixteenth century witnessed great and far-reaching changes throughout Western Europe, which are frequently referred to as the Renaissance, an intellectual movement, and the Reformation, a religious one. Of course these changes were not independent of each other; both marked a growing desire in men's minds to break away from the old systems of religion and knowledge, and pursue new lines of thought and action. Their effect on England was profound, and the whole aspect of social life in the country was affected in countless ways. We are here concerned with their effect on the nation's trade, and it is evident that in this direction, as well as in others, a deep impression was produced and an enormous expansion was experienced as a result of these activities.

The Renaissance manifested itself in a great desire for a wider and fuller knowledge of literature, art, and all other branches of learning; and, naturally, men were stimulated to find out more about the world and to undertake voyages of exploration. Englishmen took their share in these enterprises, and as a result of their adventurous expeditions new fields for commerce were opened up, and

England began fully to realise her destiny as a maritime power.

The religious movement, too, played an important part in this development; the result of the Refor-
mation in England was that the majority of English-
men forsook the Roman Catholic Church, and a Protestant Church of England was established, which threw off all connection with the Pope of Rome. Now religion in those days was a very powerful force in society, and national and inter-
national affairs were immensely affected by re-
ligious considerations Consequently Spain, which remained a Roman Catholic country, was con-
sistently hostile towards England, while the Nether-
lands—the district which we have hitherto called Flanders—became Protestant and was friendly. These two circumstances produced important results. Their hostility towards Spain inspired Englishmen to attack Spanish trading vessels and generally to inflict as much damage as possible; the piratical exploits of the English "sea-dogs" became famous, and Englishmen were stimulated and encouraged to adventures on the sea and in far-off countries. The religious sympathy between England and the Netherlands brought about a friendly feeling between the two peoples, so that the Dutch, when harassed and persecuted on religious grounds by the Spaniards, turned to England for help; and although no great assistance was forthcoming, many Flemish workers found a refuge in England, and brought with them their industries, to the great benefit of their adopted country. Moreover, the religious disturbances in

the Netherlands had the effect of destroying the greatness of Antwerp as a commercial town, and London took its place for a time as the most important centre of trade in Europe. In these ways, then, the religious movements of the sixteenth century had their effect upon the trade and commerce of England

We have mentioned the English pirates and their value to England in the latter half of the sixteenth century. Although, of course, we cannot defend the robbery and plundering which was carried on by such men as Drake, Raleigh, and Frobisher, yet it is impossible not to admire their bravery; and it is interesting to notice that the government did nothing to discourage the buccaneers. They were helping to train a race of hardy seamen; it was felt that their ships would form a very useful kind of naval reserve, and the national enemies were being harassed and injured without any expense to Elizabeth's economical administration When at length the King of Spain was goaded into war in 1588 the fleet which opposed the Armada was composed largely of privately owned vessels, many of which had been engaged in this business of piracy and were manned and commanded by those who had taken active part in freebooting expeditions against the Spaniards The strengthening of the naval forces was also the motive which prompted the government's encouragement of the fisheries, and Englishmen sailed to the distant coasts of Iceland and Newfoundland and took part in the cod and whale fisheries.

Another interesting branch of trade which was established at this time was the African slave trade. The slaves were conveyed from Africa to the plantations or settlements in America and the business proved extremely profitable to Hawkins and others who joined in the transactions. It was understood at first that the slaves were criminals, who would have been put to death if they had not been sold to the traders; but the latter did not trouble themselves much about the morality of their proceedings, and no doubt bought any suitable negroes who might be offered for sale by the native chiefs.

This period was marked by the growth of trading companies. It was clear that there were many advantages to be gained by merchants joining forces; there was much greater security, more ambitious enterprises could be undertaken, and trading interests could be much more effectually protected by combinations of merchants. The success of the Hanseatic League, which has already been mentioned, prompted the formation of an English company of merchant adventurers as early as the reign of Henry VII., and during Elizabeth's reign several others were formed They sought the approval of the government, and obtained charters granting them the sole privilege of trading with the lands in which their commercial operations were to be carried on. The Russia Company obtained a charter in 1555, receiving the monopoly of the trade with Russia and any new countries which its members might discover. The Eastland Company traded in the Baltic and

the Levant Company with Turkey, Syria, and Asia Minor. The African Company took up the slave trade and also imported gold into England.

At the close of the sixteenth century the companies had appropriated English commerce to such an extent that France was almost the only country with which trade was open to any merchant who was not a member of a company. Although this system of commercial monopoly, as we have already noticed in connection with home industry, was subject to abuse, still it is very doubtful whether commerce would have flourished without it. Merchants were encouraged to embark in new and dangerous enterprises by the prospect of special privileges; but when once the markets had been opened up and the trade well established, it was often a difficult matter to retain the monopoly. Private merchants would manage to creep in to the trade somehow, and competition was always to be met from Dutch and other foreign traders. The Companies, in fact, were not permanently successful, and the only one which firmly established itself was the famous East India Company. This was incorporated in 1600 with the object of trading with the East Indies, that is to say, India and the neighbouring islands. Considerable competition had to be faced from the Dutch and from private adventurers, but the Company persevered on the whole with success in its operations, and lasted until 1858, when its duties were taken over by the government at the close of the Indian Mutiny.

From a Statute of 1496

. . . The Merchant Adventurers inhabiting and dwelling in divers parts of this realm of England out of the city of London have their free passage with their goods, wares, and merchandises into divers coasts and parts beyond the sea, into Spain, Portugal, Brittany, Ireland, Normandy, France, Venice, Denmark, Eastland, Friesland, and other places being in league and amity with the King there to buy and sell and make their exchanges with their goods according to the law. And in the same way they before this time used and of right to have and use their free passage into the coasts of Flanders, Holland, Zealand, Brabant, and other places thereto nigh adjoining under the obeisance of the Archduke of Flanders, in which places the universal marts be commonly kept and holden four times in the year, to which marts all Englishmen and divers other nations in time past have used to resort, there to sell the commodities of their countries and freely to buy again such things as seemed to them most necessary for their profit and the weal of the country and parts that they be come from. Till now of late by the fellowship of the Mercers and other merchants and adventurers, dwelling and being free within the city of London by confederacy made among themselves of their uncharitable covetousness for their own profit, have . . . made an ordinance . . . that no Englishman resorting to the said marts shall buy or sell any goods there, except he first compound with the said fellowship merchants of London. . . . Be it therefore enacted . . . that every Englishman from henceforth have free passage into the said coasts of Flanders, Holland, Zealand, Brabant, and other places adjoining . . . without exaction, fine, extortion, or contribution to be levied upon any of them for or by any English person or persons.

From Guicciardini's "Description of the Netherlands"

Besides the natives and the French, who are here very numerous, there are six principal foreign nations

who reside at Antwerp, both in war and peace, making above 1000 merchants, including factors and servants. 1, Germans; 2, Danes and Easterlings; 3, Italians; 4, Spaniards; 5, English; and 6, Portuguese. Of those six nations the Spaniards are the most numerous. They meet twice a day at the English Exchange, where by their interpreters they buy and sell all kinds of merchandise.

To England, Antwerp sends jewels and precious stones, silver bullion, quicksilver, wrought silks, cloth of gold and silver, gold and silver thread, spices, drugs, sugar, cotton, linens fine and coarse, serges, tapestry, madder, hops in great quantities, glass, salt fish, arms of all kinds, ammunition for war, and household furniture. From England Antwerp receives vast quantities of fine and coarse draperies, fringes, and other things of that kind to a great value; the finest wool, a great quantity of lead and tin, sheep and rabbit skins without number, and various other sorts of skins and leather; beer, cheese, and other forms of provisions in great quantities.

1. *Explain the significance of the extract from the Act of* 1496.

2. *Comment, as fully as you can, upon the description given above of the trade between England and Antwerp.*

CHAPTER VII

COLONISATION

FROM the time of the Tudors England began to expand—to grow greater, more powerful, more important in several ways; and one of the signs of this expansion is seen in the establishment of colonies, which have been founded at various times, and in different ways, all over the globe. Social and industrial conditions at home had a large share in the foundation of these colonies abroad, and it is necessary to examine the motives which led to their establishment, and which have had their result in the formation of the British Empire.

Men who left England to seek their fortunes in strange lands must, of course, have had good reasons for doing so; there must have been the prospect of riches, adventure, freedom, or some other greatly desired thing, to induce them to risk the dangers which were certain to confront them. In point of fact, the earliest colonies were founded by bold and daring men, who had been inspired by the success of the Spaniards in amassing treasure. One of the great objects of statesmen and merchants at that time was the accumulation of wealth in the form of gold and silver. The Spaniards were first in the field as far as the riches of America were concerned,

and the natural result was that Spain, for a time, became an extremely wealthy nation to the great envy of her neighbours. Englishmen wished to follow this example, but soon perceived the more solid advantages of permanent settlement in new countries, for the purposes of developing the natural resources of their adopted lands; and English manufacturers and merchants looked on these new settlements as fresh markets for goods and centres for trade.

It must not be supposed that colonisation was an easy matter in those times; we are accustomed nowadays to think that if a man wishes to leave the country and live in a colony, he should be perfectly free to do so. But this was not always the case. We must not forget that the Government claimed, and actually exercised, a large amount of control over individuals in many ways in which perfect liberty is now permitted; the State arranged for the regulation of wages, for the control of industry, and for the general conditions of foreign commerce; and people were not allowed to emigrate except by special permission for a particular purpose. It was thought that by emigration the nation was robbed of part of its defences; frequent complaints were made of the loss of valuable men which the country sustained by the attractions offered by the colonies. Only in the case of criminals was permission freely given; the country was glad to be rid of them, and often they were transported to distant lands by the Government itself.

But when it appeared that the establishment of a colony would be for the general benefit, per-

mission was granted, a charter was issued, and the colonists were henceforth under the protection of the English Government. It was understood that they were to administer their own affairs within the colony, but their trade with other colonies and foreign countries was under strict supervision. In return for permission to found the colony, and for the protection of the mother country against all foes, the colonists were expected to allow their trade to be conducted in such a way as would be to the benefit of English merchants, and they were also expected to obtain many of their necessities from England, so that English manufacturers might receive their share of the advantage; thus the colonists would be contributing to the general stock of wealth which would enable the common defences to be adequate. One of the main objects seems to have been to endeavour by all means to prevent foreigners from obtaining any advantage whatever, and to this end restrictions were inevitable.

North America was the scene of our first colonies. The natural advantages of the continent appealed to enterprising Englishmen, among whom was Sir Walter Raleigh, and, largely owing to his suggestion, Virginia was colonised successfully in 1609. In 1620 the "Pilgrim Fathers" began their settlements in New England; and it is interesting to notice that a new motive is here added, namely, the desire for religious freedom. The Puritans were people who were out of sympathy with the English Church, which had been established by Elizabeth at the close of the English Reformation, and they found themselves unable to agree with

the religious arrangements of the State. They were not successful in their efforts to alter these arrangements, and in those days men who did not agree with the Established Church were regarded as being almost as dangerous as those who rebelled against the Government. Consequently they had a very unhappy time in England, and some of them, who considered religious liberty to be one of the most important things in life, resolved to seek a new home in America where they might worship as they pleased. The emigrants of 1620 were followed by many others who were of similar opinions, and several of the colonies were strongly Puritan. Another colony, Maryland, was occupied largely by Roman Catholics, who experienced just the same suspicion and intolerance in England as the Puritans.

Ultimately the English colonies stretched in an unbroken line along the Atlantic seaboard of America between Florida and Nova Scotia; the colonists were prosperous and contented, although many of them, more especially the earliest settlers, had to encounter many dangers from savage natives, and had to toil very hard to get their lands into working order. We shall see that in course of time they had to face other troubles in the form of opposition from the French, who had also established colonies to the north and to the south of them, and on this account they were glad to be under the protection of the Government at home, and bore with patience the trading restrictions placed upon them.

The settlements in America were real colonies;

the inhabitants were Englishmen or the descendants of Englishmen; they actually occupied the land, and regarded it as their permanent home. But there was another kind of colony, where English people did not settle down, but simply established stations, or factories, as they were called, for the purpose of trading with the natives. There was no intention of driving out the latter from their lands and replacing them by English colonists; but it was the object of the merchants and trading companies who conducted commercial enterprises to establish English authority in some form over the districts with which they had trading relations, so that their commerce might be more secure. Certain places on the African coast and in India were occupied in this way during the seventeenth century; although they were not colonies in the strict sense, yet the necessity of protecting English trade, especially in India, from the encroachments of foreigners, led our rulers to adopt these regions, so to speak, and bring them under the direct authority of the Government.

Our foreign possessions began with a strip of sea-coast in America, and a few trading stations in India; the commercial activity and enterprise of the English nation has resulted in an extraordinary colonial expansion, and in the establishment of the British Empire.

From CAPTAIN JOHN SMITH'S "HISTORY OF VIRGINIA" (1630)

The mountains of Virginia are of divers natures; for at the head of the bay the rocks are of a composition

like millstones. Some of marble, etc., and many pieces like crystal we found, as thrown down by water from those mountains. For in winter they are covered with much snow, and when it dissolveth the water falls with such violence that it causeth great inundations in some narrow valleys, which is scarce perceived being once in the rivers. These waters wash from the rocks such glistening tinctures, that the ground in some places seemeth as gilded, where both the rocks and the earth are so splendent to behold that better judgments than ours might have been persuaded they contained more than probabilities. . . .

The mildness of the air, the fertility of the soil, and situation of the rivers are so propitious to the nature and use of man, as no place is more convenient for pleasure, profit, and man's sustenance, under that latitude or climate. Here will live any beasts, as horses, goats, sheep, asses, hens, etc., as appeared by them that were carried thither. The waters, isles, and shoals are full of safe harbours for ships of war or merchandise, for boats of all sorts, for transportation or fishing, etc. The bay and rivers have much merchantable fish, and places fit for salt coats, building of ships, making of iron, etc.

Muscovy and Poland do yearly receive many thousands for pitch, tar, soap-ashes, rosin, flax, cordage, sturgeon, masts, yards, wainscot, furs, glass, and such like; also Swethland for iron and copper. France in like manner, for wine, canvas, and salt. Spain as much for iron, steel, figs, raisins, and sacks. Italy with silks and velvets consumes our chief commodities. Holland maintains itself by fishing and trading at our own doors. All these temporise with each other for necessities, but all as uncertain as peace or wars. Besides the charge, travail, and danger of transporting them, by seas, lands, storms, and pirates, then how much hath Virginia the prerogative of all those flourishing kingdoms for the benefit of our land, when as within one hundred miles all those are to be had, either ready provided by nature, or else to be prepared, were there but industrious men to labour.

Only of copper we may doubt is wanting, but there is good probability that both copper and better minerals are there to be had for their labour. Other countries have it. So then here is a place, a nurse for soldiers, a practice for mariners, a trade for merchants, a reward for the good, and that which is most of all, a business (most acceptable to God) to bring such poor infidels to the knowledge of God and his holy gospel. . . .

Those temporising proceedings to some may seem too charitable to such a daily daring treacherous people: to others not pleasing, that we washed not the ground with their bloods, nor showed such strange inventions in mangling, murdering, ransacking, and destroying (as did the Spaniards) the simple bodies of such ignorant souls: nor delightful, because not stuffed with relations of heaps and mines of gold and silver, nor such rare commodities, as the Portugals and Spaniards found in the East and West Indies. The want thereof hath begot us (that were the first undertakers) no less scorn and contempt, than the noble conquests and valiant adventures beautified it, with praise and honour. Too much I confess the world cannot attribute to their ever memorable merit; and, to clear us from the blind world's ignorant censure, these few words may suffice any reasonable understanding.

It was the Spaniard's good hap to happen in those parts where were infinite numbers of people, who had manured the ground with that providence, it afforded victuals at all times. And time had brought them to that perfection, they had the use of gold and silver, and the most of such commodities as those countries afforded; so that, what the Spaniards got was chiefly the spoil and pillage of their own hands. But had those fruitful countries been as savage, as barbarous, as ill peopled, as little planted, laboured, and manured as Virginia, their labours it is likely would have produced as small profit as ours.

But had Virginia been peopled, planted, manured, and adorned with such store of precious stones and rich commodities as were the Indies; then, had we not gotten

and done as much as by their examples might be expected from us, the world might then have traduced us and our merits, and have made shame and infamy our recompense and reward.

But we chanced in a land even as God made it, where we only found an idle, improvident, scattered people, ignorant of the knowledge of gold and silver, or any commodities, and careless of anything but from hand to mouth, except baubles of no worth; nothing to encourage us, but what accidentally we found nature afforded. Which ere we could bring to recompense our pains, defray our charges, and satisfy our Adventurers, we were to discover the country, subdue the people, bring them to be tractable, civil and industrious, and teach them trades, that the fruits of the labours might make us some recompense; or plant such colonies of our own, that must first make provision how to live of themselves, ere they can bring to perfection the commodities of the country, which doubtless will be as commodious for England as the West Indies for Spain, if it be rightly managed; notwithstanding all our homebred opinions, that will argue the contrary, as formerly some have done against the Spaniards and Portuguese.

From a STATUTE OF 1663

In regard His Majesty's Plantations beyond the seas are inhabited and peopled by his subjects of this his Kingdom of England, for the maintaining a greater correspondence and kindness between them and keeping them in a firmer dependence on it, and rendering them yet more beneficial and advantageous to it in the farther employment and increase of English shipping and seamen, sale of English woollen and other manufactures and commodities, rendering the navigation to and from the same more safe and cheap, and making this kingdom a Staple not only of the commodities of those plantations but also of the commodities of other countries and places for the supplying of them, it being the usage of other nations to keep their Plantations' trade to themselves,

Be it enacted that no commodity of the growth, production, or manufacture of Europe shall be imported into any land belonging to his Majesty, but what shall be *bona fide* and without fraud laden and shipped in England, and in English-built shipping . . . and whereof the master and three-fourths of the mariners at least are English, and which shall be carried directly thence to the said lands and from no other place or places whatsoever.

1. *Describe the inducements offered to colonists in Virginia.*

2. *What were the essential differences between the English and Spanish colonies in America?*

3. *What do you gather from the statute quoted above as to the relation between the colonies and the mother country?*

CHAPTER VIII

THE SEVENTEENTH AND EIGHTEENTH CENTURIES: COMMERCE

THE great religious, intellectual, and commercial movements of the sixteenth century had roused Englishmen to a full sense of their opportunities; national pride had been awakened, and a keen desire was manifested to make England a great power, supreme over other nations in commerce and maritime adventure. Other countries, too, had similar ambitions, and jealousy and rivalry resulted. For the idea of the advantage of monopoly was still strong in men's minds, and it was believed, as a matter of course, that the greatest benefits could be obtained by restricting other people in their trade, or by depriving them of it altogether, gaining by their loss, and enjoying sole privileges. This was a selfish policy, and was not altogether the wisest; but it dominated European commerce for a long time, and led to many quarrels and wars, in which England took a prominent part.

The principal nations concerned in this commercial rivalry were Spain, Portugal, Holland, France, and England. The Portuguese very soon dropped out of the race, but with each of the other

nations England quarrelled from time to time, and several wars were undertaken.

From the time of the discoveries of Columbus Spain claimed a monopoly of the trade with the greater part of America and the West Indies. Englishmen were not inclined to agree to this claim, and, as we have seen, established colonies of their own in those parts of America which had not been appropriated by the Spaniards, and continually interfered with trade in the Spanish colonies themselves. For instance, Hawkins sold his slaves in the Spanish plantations in direct opposition to the laws of Spain, and Englishmen generally seemed to take the utmost delight in irritating, to the greatest possible extent, their powerful rivals. As the seventeenth century progressed Spain declined in importance, and during the time of Cromwell's Protectorate England captured and retained Jamaica, one of the most valuable of the West Indian islands.

The relations between England and Holland were rather peculiar. At first, during the Reformation period, there was a strong bond of sympathy between the two nations; they both became Protestant, and both hated Spain. The Dutch had very good reason for their hatred, for their country was governed by Spain, and they suffered greatly from religious persecution. At the beginning of the seventeenth century, however, they threw off the Spanish yoke and became an independent republic. Toward the end of the century their independence was threatened by France, whose King, Louis XIV., was extremely ambitious.

Englishmen were by this time beginning to realise that the national enemy was no longer Spain, but France, whose growing power and commercial activity were soon to result in a keen struggle for supremacy. This common dislike of France was another reason why England and Holland ought to have been allies. But there was a fact which constantly overruled all other considerations; the Dutch were energetic and prosperous traders, and whatever the political situation might be, there was continuous rivalry and ill-will between the merchants of the two nations. Holland was smaller and weaker, and had to be crushed, according to the prevailing idea that a monopoly of trade was the great thing to obtain; Cromwell's Navigation Act, afterwards confirmed by Charles II., was designed to encourage English shipping at the expense of the Dutch, who up to that time had in their hands much of the world's carrying trade. The efforts of the Dutch to recover their position by war were quite ineffectual, and their trade declined steadily. Their American colony of New Amsterdam was captured, and its name was changed to New York.

The struggle with France was much more severe than those with Spain and Holland. By the end of the sixteenth century English colonists had successfully settled in America, and the merchants of the English East India Company were conducting a vigorous and profitable trade from their factories on the coast of India. The French had adopted precisely the same course; they had established colonies in America to the north and south of the English, and a French company was endeavouring

to participate in the trade of India. The consequence was that jealousy and ill-feeling arose between the French and English settlers and traders, and open hostilities were often engaged in, whether a state of war existed between England and France or not. Enmity arose between the two nations, and the question of colonial and commercial supremacy had to be decided by war.

In 1702 the first of these great wars commenced. The real cause was the determination of England to prevent France becoming too powerful. The ambitious French King wished to control the resources of Spain as well as of his own kingdom, and if England had not made war he might have wrought great injury to English interests. As a result of this war, in which Marlborough was the English leader, Gibraltar, Hudson's Bay, Newfoundland, and Nova Scotia were added to the English possessions. This fact shows clearly that commercial interests were at the root of the affair. In 1740 war again broke out. It was a war which affected many European states, and the origin of it did not concern England at all; but France took part, and England took the opposite side. Again, in 1756, when hostilities were renewed, France and England were once more opposed to each other, and by this time the quarrels between our colonists and traders in America and India were largely responsible for the war.

In America the French attempted to confine the English colonists to their narrow strip of coast by building forts between their northern and southern colonies and claiming all the adjacent

territory. The English colonists vigorously resisted and the Government at home sent out soldiers and supplies to help them. They were completely successful, and when peace was made in 1763, almost all the French possessions in America had been handed over to England, and the power of France in America was at an end.

Similar success attended the English in India. The rival companies frequently came into conflict with each other, and formed alliances with native rulers. By the year 1748 French influence was very strong in Southern India, but the splendid work of Clive and other officers of the company and of the Government resulted in the defeat of the French and the loss of their authority. They retained only one trading station, and all the power from about 1760 was in the hands of the English, whose subsequent difficulties were with the native rulers and not with other Europeans.

This brief outline of our commercial struggles will serve to show the immense importance which was now attached to foreign trade as a means of national prosperity. The material progress of the mercantile classes was very evident, and the value of colonies as markets for our manufactures was abundantly proved. English goods were in great request, and this demand no doubt encouraged inventors to use their ingenuity to provide manufacturers with new methods of producing their goods. In the latter part of the eighteenth century many improvements in machinery were discovered, steam was applied, and England was able to supply the world with articles which no other country

could produce. Thus manufacture and commerce went hand in hand, and soon absorbed almost all the energies and activities of the nation.

From "AN ACT FOR PROHIBITING ALL TRADE AND COMMERCE WITH FRANCE" (1689)

Forasmuch as your Majesties upon just and honourable grounds have been pleased to declare an actual war with France, and it hath been found by long experience that the importing of French wines, vinegar, brandy, linen, silks, salt, paper, and other commodities of France hath much exhausted the treasure of this nation, lessened the value of the native commodities and manufactures, and greatly impoverished the English artificers and handicrafts and caused great detriment to this kingdom in general, Be it therefore enacted that none of the commodities aforesaid or any other goods whatever of the growth, product, or manufacture of any of the dominions of the French king shall during the term of three years be brought in by land or shall be imported in any ships into any port in the Kingdom of England, Ireland, or Wales . . . and that all importation and selling of any French wines, vinegar . . . or other commodities is hereby declared to be a common nuisance to this Kingdom.

From THE NAVIGATION ACT (1651)

For the increase of the shipping and the encouragement of the navigation of this nation, which, under the good providence and protection of God, is so great a means of the welfare and safety of this commonwealth; be it enacted by this present parliament, and the authority thereof, that from and after the 1st day of December, one thousand six hundred fifty and one, and from thence forwards no goods or commodities whatsoever, of the growth production or manufacture of Asia, Africa, or America, or of any part thereof; or of any islands belonging to them, or any of them, or which are described or laid down in the usual maps or

cards of those places, as well of the English plantations as others shall be imported or brought into this commonwealth of England or into Ireland, or any other lands, islands, plantations or territories to this commonwealth belonging, or in their possession, in any other ship or ships, vessel or vessels whatsoever, but only in such as do truly and without fraud belong only to the people of this commonwealth or the plantations thereof, as the proprietors or right owners thereof; and whereof the master and mariners are also for the most part of them of the people of this commonwealth, under the penalty of the forfeiture and loss of all the goods that shall be imported contrary to this act, as also of the ship (with all her tackle, guns and apparel) in which the said goods or commodities shall be so brought in and imported; the one moiety to the use of the commonwealth, and the other moiety to the use and behoof of any person or persons who shall seize the said goods or commodities. . . .

[And the like is further enacted for Europe] except only such foreign ships and vessels as do truly and properly belong to the people of that country or place of which the said goods are the growth production or manufacture. . . .

Be it also further enacted by the authority aforesaid that from henceforth it shall not be lawful to any person or persons whatsoever, to load or cause to be loaden and carried in any bottom or bottoms, ship or ships, vessel or vessels whatsoever, whereof any stranger of strangers born (unless such as be denizens or naturalized) be owners, part owners, or master, any fish, victual, wares, or things of what kind or nature soever the same shall be from one port or creek of this commonwealth, to another port or creek of the same.

From "ENGLAND'S TREASURE BY FOREIGN TRADE" (THOMAS MUN, 1664)

Although a kingdom may be enriched by gifts received, or by purchase taken from some other nations, yet these are things uncertain and of small consideration when they happen. The ordinary means therefore to

encrease our wealth and treasure is by Foraign Trade, wherein wee must ever observe this rule; to sell more to strangers yearly than wee consume of theirs in value. For suppose that when this Kingdom is plentifully served with the Cloth, Lead, Tinn, Iron, Fish, and other native commodities, we doe yearly export the overplus to forraign countries to the value of twenty-two hundred thousand pounds; by which means we are enabled beyond the Seas to buy and bring in forraign wares for our use and consumptions, to the value of twenty hundred thousand pounds; by this order duly kept in our trading, we may rest assured that the kingdom shall be enriched yearly two hundred thousand pounds, which must be brought to us in so much Treasure; because that part of our stock which is not returned to us in wares must necessarily be brought home in treasure. . . .

The revenue or stock of the Kingdom by which it is provided of forraign wares is either Natural or Artificial. The natural wealth is so much only as can be spared from our own use and necessities to be exported unto strangers. The Artificial consists in our manufactures and industrious trading with forraign commodities, concerning which I will set down such particulars as may serve for the cause we have in hand.

First, although this Realm be already exceeding rich by nature, yet might it be much encreased by bringing the waste grounds (which are infinite) into such employments as should no way hinder the present revenues of other lands, but hereby to supply ourselves and prevent the importations of Hemp, Flax, Cordage, Tobacco, and divers and other things which now we fetch from strangers to our great impoverishing. . .

We may likewise diminish our importations, if we would soberly refrain from excessive consumption of forraign wares in our diet and rayment. . . .

In our exportations we must not only regard our own superfluities, but also we must consider our neighbours' necessities, that so upon the wares, which they cannot want, nor yet be furnished thereof elsewhere, we

may (besides the sale of Materials) gain so much of manufacture as we can, and also endeavour to sell them dear, so far forth as the high price cause not a less sale in the quantity. . . .

The value of our exportations likewise may be much advanced when we perform it ourselves in our own ships, for then we get only, not the price of our wares as they are worth here, but also the Merchants gains, the charges of ensurance, and fraight to carry them beyond the seas. . . .

It were policie and profit for the State to suffer manufactures made of forraign Materials to be exposed custome-free, as Velvets and all other wrought Silks, Fustians, thrown silks and the like, it would employ very many poor people, and much encrease the value of our stock yearly issued into other countreys, and it would (for this purpose) cause the more forraign materials to be brought in, to the improvement of His Majesties Customes. I will here remember a notable increase in our manufacture of winding and twisting only of forraign raw silk, which within 35 years to my knowledge did not employ more than 300 people in the City and suburbs of London, where at this present time it doth set on work above fourteen thousand souls, as upon diligent enquiry hath been credibly reported unto His Majesties Commissioners for Trade. . . .

Lastly, in all things we must endeavour to make the most we can of our own, whether it be Natural or Artificial; And forasmuch as the people, which lived by the Arts are far more in number than they who are masters of the fruits, we ought the more carefully to maintain those endeavours of the multitude, in whom doth consist the greatest strength and riches both of King and Kingdom; for where the people are many, and the arts good, there the traffique must be great and the Countrey rich.

From SIR W. PETTY'S "POLITICAL ARITHMETIC" (1677)

That the power and wealth of England hath increased this last forty years.

It is not much to be doubted but that the territories under the king's dominion have increased; forasmuch as New England, Virginia, Barbadoes, and Jamaica, Tangier, and Bombay, have, since that time, been either added to His Majesty's territories, or improved from a desert condition, to abound with people, buildings, shipping, and the production of many useful commodities.

And as for the land of England, Scotland, and Ireland, as it is not less in quantity than it was forty years ago, so it is manifest that, by reason of the draining of the fens, watering of dry grounds, improving of forests and commons, making of heathy and barren grounds to bear sainfoin and clover grass, ameliorating and multiplying several sorts of fruit and garden stuff, making some rivers navigable, etc.; I say, it is manifest that the land in its present condition is able to bear more provisions and commodities than it was forty years ago.

Secondly, although the People of England, Scotland, and Ireland, which have extraordinarily perished, by the Plague and Sword, do amount to about 300,000 above what would have died in the ordinary way: yet the ordinary increase by generation of 10,000,000 which doubles in 200 years, as hath been shown by the observators upon the bills of mortality, may, in forty years, which is a fifth part of the same time, have increased one-fifth part of the whole number or 2,000,000. . . .

As for Housing, the streets of London itself speaks it. I conceive it is double in value in that city to what it was forty years since. And as for Housing in the country, it has increased at Newcastle, Yarmouth, Norwich, Exeter, Portsmouth, Cowes; Dublin, Kinsale, Londonderry and Coleraine in Ireland, far beyond the proportion of what I can learn has been dilapidated in other places. For in Ireland, where the ruin was greatest, the Housing, taking all together, is now more valuable than forty years ago. Nor is this to be doubted; since Housing is now more splendid than in those days; and

the number of dwellers is increased by nearly $\frac{1}{8}$ part; as on the last paragraph is set forth.

As for Shipping, His Majesty's Navy is now triple or quadruple to what it was forty years since, and before the "Sovereign" was built. . . .

Besides, there are employed in Guinea and American trade, above 40,000 tons of shipping per annum; which trade in those days was inconsiderable. . . .

Moreover, if rented lands and houses have increased, and if trade hath increased also. it is certain that money, which payeth those rents and driveth on trade, must have increased also.

Lastly, I leave it to the consideration of all observers, whether the number and splendour of Coaches, Equipage, and Household Furniture hath not increased since that time: to say nothing of the Postage of Letters, which hath increased from one to twenty; which argues the increase of business and negotiation. . . .

1. *What arguments can you give for and against the Navigation Act?*

2. *Which do you think are the most valuable of Mun's observations with regard to foreign trade?*

3. *Show from any of the above passages how trade and commerce prospered during this period.*

CHAPTER IX

THE SEVENTEENTH AND EIGHTEENTH CENTURIES: MANUFACTURES

A GREAT outburst of industrial activity, and an enormous increase in manufactures took place towards the end of the eighteenth century, but this we shall reserve for later chapters, and deal here with the growth of manufacture from the time of the Tudors to the Industrial Revolution. One of the most interesting features of this period is the assistance which was given to English manufacture by immigrants from foreign lands, and generally England managed to profit very considerably by the misfortunes or the misgovernment of other nations. For instance, during the first half of the seventeenth century England did not engage in any serious warfare, while the continent, especially Germany, suffered severely by reason of a disastrous war of religion. While these distractions were interfering with progress abroad, England went steadily ahead, and usually did not engage in quarrels or warfare unless some decided commercial advantage was likely to be gained. Again, just as the persecution of the Netherlanders by Philip II. of Spain had driven hundreds of them to seek refuge and establish their industries in England,

and at the same time had caused much of the commerce of Holland to be transferred to England, so a century later religious persecution in France produced a similar result; for in 1685 Louis XIV. revoked the Edict of Nantes, by which his grandfather had secured toleration for the French Protestants, and many thousands of them fled from their native country to seek religious freedom elsewhere. They were the most industrious and skilful among the French, and England offered a refuge for large numbers of them; during the twenty years between 1670 and 1690 some eighty thousand foreigners are said to have come to England. These refugees established their industries wherever they went, and of course the result was a great development of manufacture.

These Huguenot immigrants were particularly useful in helping along the silk-weaving trade. Hitherto France had been the chief silk-manufacturing country, but the effect of the coming of the refugees was soon shown by the falling-off of French production and the great increase in England. Many new methods and important improvements were introduced, and the Huguenot colony at Spitalfields long remained the centre of a flourishing industry. Other trades and manufactures were brought over or improved by these valuable people; the making of sail-cloth was started by them, and this was encouraged as being particularly useful for the navy. Another very important manufacture was that of paper. Coarse paper had long been made at home, but all supplies for writing and printing purposes had to be

imported, chiefly from France. The manufacture of these finer kinds was started in England by French refugees, and in a short time the demand was almost entirely supplied by paper of English manufacture. Yet another example of the benefit derived from the foreigners is seen in the improvements in the making of glass. English manufacturers had been content with rough methods and poor results, but the Huguenots taught them how to produce finer and better glass with greatly superior methods. Again, the pottery manufacture owes much to the refugees; they extended the cutlery trade; and in very many ways their value to English manufacture can hardly be estimated.

While these newer manufactures were being established and improved, the old woollen industry was still making progress. The disturbances in the Netherlands at the end of the sixteenth century had practically destroyed Flemish competition, and practically the whole of the wool produced in England was used in the manufacture of cloth at home, while the export of cloth increased steadily, so that by the end of the seventeenth century woollen goods constituted more than one-half of the exports from England. The industry was spread all over England; the eastern counties were still to the front, but Kent and the western counties took their share, and Yorkshire was beginning to be active in this branch of manufacture, in which it now occupies the foremost place. The wide distribution of the woollen industry shows its national character; the time had not yet arrived for its concentration into centres. The work was

done in the homes of the people, and anything similar to the modern "factory" was very rare.

It is interesting to observe the various stages of development of the cloth manufacture. At first the work was carried on in the family for the use of the household alone. This was in the days when the population was very scattered, and villages and families were isolated and depended almost entirely upon themselves. Then under the gild system the craftsman, with perhaps a few journeymen and apprentices, bought his own materials and sold his own goods to his customers. The restrictions of the gilds helped to drive the growing industry back into the country, and the "domestic system" was established, and this lasted until the necessity arose, at the close of the eighteenth century, of producing on a large scale, with machinery and the massing of the workers in large factories under the direction of capitalist employers. One of the features of the domestic system is the presence of the middleman, generally called the clothier, who takes all the risks of the trade, generally buying the raw material, distributing it to the workers, receiving the manufactured goods and selling them. Thus the operations of the workpeople were confined to the process of manufacture, and this was often engaged in as an additional occupation in agricultural districts. All the members of the family could assist in the work, and during the long winter evenings and other times when work in the fields was not practicable, the loom was a useful source of income.

We must not omit to notice the progress made

during this period in two industries which are now of the utmost importance; the coal trade and the iron trade were still almost in their infancy, but their growth was steady and continuous. Coal, of course, was not required to a very large extent until the introduction of steam-driven machinery, but its value was always recognised and the output steadily increased. Iron was always in demand, and our own supply was quite insufficient to meet our requirements, until the method of using coal for smelting the iron ore was discovered and applied. Before this time charcoal was used for this purpose, and the forests which at one time occupied such a large portion of the country gradually disappeared from this cause. The woods of Sussex, Warwick, Stafford, and many other counties were largely destroyed; and yet iron had to be extensively imported. But early in the seventeenth century coal began to be used in iron-smelting, and gradually, as improvements were made in the methods of mining, our vast mineral wealth was more and more utilised; the discovery of the blast furnace and other inventions of the latter half of the eighteenth century led the way towards the enormous growth of the coal and iron trade which is associated with the Industrial Revolution.

From James I.'s Proclamation Appointing the Commission of 1622

We have understood by the general complaints of our loving subjects, from all the parts of this our realm of England, that the cloth of this Kingdom hath of late years wanted that estimation in foreign parts which formerly it had, and that the wools of this Kingdom have

fallen much from their wonted values, and trade in general is so far out of frame that the merchants and clothiers of this Kingdom are greatly discouraged, so that great numbers of people employed by them and depending on them, want work, the best means of their livelihood, the landlords fail in their rents and revenues wherewith to maintain their ordinary charges, and the farmers have not so good means to raise their rents as heretofore they had, and ourself also find the defects thereof by the decay of our Customs and other duties; and generally the whole commonwealth suffereth, so that it is high time to look into the cause of this great decay of trade and the commodities of this our Kingdom, as also to have fit remedies applied for the restoring the same to their former flourishing estate.

We . . . do by these presents give unto you full power and authority to take unto your considerations and cares the causes aforesaid, with these particular articles following:

What are the true causes why the wools of this our Kingdom of England are so much fallen from their wonted values, and to consider what are the most probable means to raise them again to their former price and estimation. . . .

And because there are now many laws in force concerning the making of cloth, which for their number and contradiction do perplex and intangle the makers of cloth, and makes it hard to be discerned what the law is in many particulars; we would have you to collect and observe those laws that are most convenient and fit for the present times, to the end that those may be specially commanded to be observed. . . .

And whereas a suspicion has been raised upon the societies and companies of the Merchant Adventurers and other merchants and of some companies of handicraftsmen, that for their private gain and particular advantage they make and put into execution divers ordinances amongst themselves for ordering their trades and mysteries, which tend to the hurt of the public, we will now command you to inform yourselves of the

ordinances of such companies for the ordering of their trade, to the end that if it shall appear that anything therein contained be unfit to be continued as tending *to the general hurt of others, either in the making of* cloth or other merchandize or wares of this Kingdom over dear or otherwise, that the same may be laid down. . . .

And because we understand that a great mass of treasure is yearly spent upon linen cloth, brought and bought from beyond the seas at dear rates, and because it is conceived that if the fishing so much desired by us be thoroughly undertaken, and our shipping increased, it will require much greater proportion of hemp for cordage and other uses in the craft or mystery of fishing, which would set an infinite number of our people at work in preparing and making the same; we commend unto your considerations the best ways how the sowing of hemp and flax may be encouraged and undertaken within this Kingdom, whereby so much good would redound to us and our people.

And for that it is very fit to commend the wearing of the cloth of our Kingdoms to other nations by our own example at home, we would have you consider by what means the cloth and stuffs made out of the wools of these our Kingdoms may be more frequently worn by our own subjects.

From DEFOE'S "TOUR THROUGH GREAT BRITAIN" (1725)

The Clothiers come to Leeds early in the morning with their cloth; and, as few bring more than one piece, the Market-days being so frequent, they go into the Inns and Public-houses with it, and there set it down.

At about six o'clock in the Summer and about Seven in the Winter, the Clothiers being all come by that time the Market Bell at the Old Chapel by the Bridge rings; upon which it would surprise a Stranger to see in how few Minutes without Hurry, Noise, or the least Disorder, the whole Market is filled, and all the Boards upon the Tressels covered with Cloth, as close to one another as the Pieces can lie longways,

each Proprietor standing behind his own Piece, who form a Mercantile Regiment, as it were, drawn up in a double Line, in as great Order as a Military one.

As soon as the Bell has ceased ringing, the Factors and Buyers of all Sorts enter the Market, and walk up and down between the Rows, as their Occasions direct. Some of them have their foreign Letters of Orders, with Patterns sealed on them, in their hands; the Colours of which they match, by holding them to the Cloths they think they agree to. When they have pitched upon their Cloth, they lean over to the Clothier, and, by a Whisper, in the fewest words imaginable, the Price is stated; one asks, the other bids, and they agree or disagree in a Moment.

The reason of this prudent Silence is owing to the Clothiers standing so near to one another; for it is not reasonable that one Trader should know another's Traffick.

If a merchant has bidden a Clothier a Price, and he will not take it, he may go after him to his house, and tell him he has considered of it, and is willing to let him have it; but they are not to make any new Agreement for it, so as to remove the Market from the Street to the Merchant's House.

The Buyers generally walk up and down twice on each Side of the Rows, and in little more than an Hour all the Business is done. In less than half an Hour you will perceive the Cloth begin to move off, the Clothier taking it up upon his shoulder to carry it to the Merchant's House. At about half an Hour after Eight the Market Bell rings again, upon which the Buyers immediately disappear, the Cloth is all sold; or if any remains, it is carried back into the Inn. By Nine o'Clock the Boards and Tressels are removed, and the Street left at Liberty for the Market-people of other Professions, the Linendrapers, Shoemakers, Hard-waremen, and the like.

Thus you see 10 or 20,000*l.* worth of Cloth, and sometimes much more, bought and sold in little more than an hour, the Laws of the Market being the most

strictly observed that I ever saw in any Market in *England*.

If it be asked, How all these Goods at this Place, at *Wakefield*, and at *Halifax*, are vended and disposed of? I would observe;

First, That there is an Home-consumption; to supply which, several considerable Traders in *Leeds* go with Droves of Pack-horses, loaden with those Goods, to all the Fairs and Market-towns almost over the whole Island, not to sell by Retail, but to the Shops by Wholesale; giving large Credit. 'Tis ordinary for one of these Men to carry a thousand Pounds worth of Cloth with him at a time; and, having sold that, to send his Horses back for as much more; and this very often in the Summer; for they travel chiefly at that Season, because of the Badness of the Roads.

There are others, who give Commissions to Factors and Ware-housekeepers in *London* to sell for them, who not only supply all the Shopkeepers and Wholesale Men in London, but sell also very great Quantities to the Merchants, as well for Exportation to the *English* Colonies in *America*, which take off great Quantities of the coarse Goods, especially *New England*, *New York*, *Virginia*, &c. as also to the *Russia Merchants*, who send exceeding great Quantities to *Petersburg*, *Dantzick*, *Narva*, *Sweden*, and *Pomerania*, tho' of late the Manufactures of this kind set up in *Prussia*, and other *Northern* Parts of *Germany*, interfere a little with them.

The third Sorts are such as receive Commissions from abroad, to buy Cloth for the Merchants chiefly in *Hamburg*, and in *Holland* &c. These are not only many in Number, but some of them very considerable in their Dealings, and correspond with the farthest Provinces in *Germany*.

1. *What good purposes were intended to be served by the Commission of 1622?*

2. *Describe the extent and importance of the woollen manufacture early in the eighteenth century.*

3. *Give a short account of the services rendered to England by foreign immigrants since the Conquest.*

CHAPTER X

THE SEVENTEENTH AND EIGHTEENTH CENTURIES: AGRICULTURE

BEFORE proceeding to consider the developments and progress of agriculture after the sixteenth century, let us try to get some idea of the general aspect of the country, which in those days presented a very different appearance from that to which we are now accustomed. There were immense tracts of waste land and forest, even close to London there were vast areas of wild and almost uninhabited country; a great part of Essex was occupied by Epping and Hainault Forests, a large portion of Surrey was waste, and towards the west the region round Hounslow was a wilderness. Much of Cambridgeshire and Huntingdonshire was fenland, and the drainage and reclamation of lands in these counties, as well as in Lincolnshire, Northamptonshire, Suffolk, and Norfolk, occupied a very long time. Derbyshire was almost a desert, and not far away was the huge forest of Sherwood, covering part of Nottinghamshire. Farther north the country was still more sparsely populated.

Communication between different parts of the country was very difficult, as the roads were invariably bad, and some were quite useless in bad

weather. Travelling was a laborious and expensive business, and there was no inducement for the country folk to go far away from their native villages, which were almost as isolated and self-supporting as in Norman times. In fact, there had been surprisingly little advance in the conditions of life of the English peasants; villeinage had certainly disappeared entirely by the close of the sixteenth century, and the yeomen and small farmers paid rent to the landlords, and were free and independent. But beyond this, very little change was experienced. The agricultural population was slow in adopting improvements, even when their advantages were obvious to intelligent people. The common field system of cultivation, for instance, still persisted over more than half of the arable land of the country, in spite of the fact that it was wasteful and unsatisfactory; but the introduction of new methods meant inevitably that some one or other must at once suffer inconvenience, and perhaps unjust treatment, and changes were deferred as long as possible. But nevertheless the drawbacks were always perfectly plain; much land was wasted in paths and in the baulks between the strips in the common fields; an immense amount of time, too, was wasted by each tenant in passing from one part of his holding to another, for his strips might be scattered over quite a large area of land; this useless expenditure of time was especially inconvenient during the operations of reaping corn and carting hay. Again, there was little attempt at drainage, for it was no use one man draining his strips if his neighbour did not

do the same, for the water would simply accumulate and more harm than good would be done. Similarly, inconvenience was caused by the system of common herding of cattle and sheep; diseases were easily spread, and it was impossible for each man to look after his animals properly when they were mixed up with those of the other villagers. The practice of throwing open the fields after harvest made the cultivation of winter crops impossible, even after their value was known.

In fact, the common cultivation system was full of drawbacks and objections, and so long as it remained in force comparatively little progress in agriculture was made; for no improvements were possible without joint action; an enterprising tenant would find himself hampered at all points by his neighbours, and unless he could obtain a piece of land entirely to himself, where he could introduce his improvements and exercise his skill and ingenuity, he could not possibly entertain any hopes of profit. He could only do as his ancestors had done and his fellow-tenants were doing—live from hand to mouth and be content to supply his immediate and simple needs.

It is easy to perceive, therefore, that progress in agriculture depended largely upon the adoption of some plan of individual occupation, which would stimulate enterprise. When this was recognised, enclosures were made and large farms established. These enclosures must be distinguished from those made for the purpose of providing pasture for sheep; the latter caused, as we have seen, great distress by depopulating the country, while the

former had at any rate the ultimate advantage that the productive power of the land was very greatly increased by the more sensible and scientific methods which could be employed But this result was not achieved without injustice and hardship; the advantage lay always with the landowners, who in their eagerness to obtain the greatest possible benefit to themselves often enclosed lands which were really the common property of the tenants; and generally the abolition of the old system was carried out without any regard whatever for the interests of the yeomen and small farmers.

The changes which have been briefly outlined went on during the whole of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, but more especially towards the end of the eighteenth, owing to the development of manufactures and the increase of population which took place during that period. A considerable stimulus was also given to agricultural progress by the fact that farming became a kind of fashionable hobby at this time. Men who inherited land, successful merchants who sought social position by becoming landowners and buying out the small farmers, all joined in a new enthusiasm for farming, and this helped the tendency towards better methods, greater variety and quality of produce, and more satisfactory results generally. More capital was employed, larger farms were made, and agriculture became a source of great profit to the landowner, for rents increased enormously.

But it does not appear that the agricultural labourers shared to any great extent in this prosperity. We must not forget that the Elizabethan

law was still in force which directed that the wages of workers in rural districts were to be assessed or regulated by the local justices. This was of course in accordance with the theory that all the industry and trade of the nation should be under state supervision, in the best interests of the whole community; and so long as this idea of government control was accepted we find all kinds of restrictions and abuses. The local justices who assessed wages were almost invariably the landowners of the neighbourhood, and they generally cut down wages to the lowest possible point; in fact they sometimes fixed the rate so low that it was quite impossible for the labourers and their families to exist on their wages, and poor relief out of the rates had to be given to make up the deficiency.

Under these circumstances we cannot expect that the lot of the workers in the country would be a happy one; some improvement certainly took place about the middle of the eighteenth century, owing to the great success of the new methods of agriculture, but the old bad conditions soon returned during the general upheaval known as the Industrial Revolution.

It will no doubt appear, from our observation of the life of the folk in the country, that their history is not a particularly pleasant one; with the exception of a few brief periods of prosperity, we find the story full of grievances, oppression, injustice, drudgery, and hardship; and this picture is in fact perfectly true. The toilers on the land have usually been the first to suffer when unfavourable circumstances have arisen, and they

have been the last to gain benefit from progress and the advance of civilisation.

From BLITH'S "ENGLISH IMPROVER" (1653)

Through so deep an affectation of tillage and ploughing in common, although it be to his perpetual slavery and drudgery all his days, he will not leave it, and especially through a prejudice he hath taken against enclosure through some men's depopulation and oppression, and destruction of tillage, that he will not approve hereof on any terms, but oppose with all the might and main he can. "What," saith he, "enclose, depopulate, destroy the poor? No, our fathers lived well upon their land without enclosure, kept good hospitality, many servants, and bred up many children, and abominated the thoughts thereof, and so will we prevent it if we can; we will toil and moil all our days, and breed up our children to keep sheep, horse, or beast, and to take up our inheritance of thirty, forty, or fifty pounds by the year. . . ."

It is and never was otherwise seen, that men would ever join together in one body, to use their utmost to improve any of these lands to the best advantage; for though common of pasture is men's own inheritance, and every man not knowing his lot, or portion, how rarely will they ever join or agree therein? Although they are all persuaded of a probable great advancement, yet one says, "I shall not have so great an advantage by it as my neighbour;" another believes it will be good for the present, but it will not last; and another says he hath no reason to bear so great a proportion of the change, though he has as much land, yet he is not capable of so great an improvement; and another that he would be well content to help on any public work if others would, but for him to bestow cost and improve his land, or commons, for others that will bestow none to eat and bite up his cost, much discourageth him; and indeed there is some reason for his backwardness; and a thousand excuses and cavils there must be, which, though a wise man may easily answer, yet never convince their judgments, for "it hath ever been so since their days,"

and "their forefathers were as wise as they," and "let it alone and we will take the present profit it yields;" and there is an end of their improvement.

From ARTHUR YOUNG'S "NORTHERN TOUR" (1771)

RECAPITULATION

Rental	£16,000,000
Value	536,000,000
Supposed rental, houses included	21,000,000
Value of total	636,000,000
Stock in husbandry	110,000,000
Product of the soil in husbandry	83,237,691
Expenditure of husbandry	65,000,000
Profit of husbandry	18,237,691
Income from the soil	59,601,294
Population of agriculture, exclusive of landlords, clergy, parochial poor, and manufacturers	Souls 2,800,000

This little table may be called that part of the State of the Nation which depends on rural economics. I shall venture a few remarks on its general prosperity, as deducible from these and other particulars.

The first point of capital importance is the product of the soil. From this arises everything else: it is the total which yields an income to so many ranks of people; it is the foundation, if I may so express myself, whereon the Kingdom is built; the riches, income, and population of the state evidently depend on this; increase the product of the soil and you inevitably increase all the several incomes arising from it; you add to the stock of riches and increase the number of souls dependent on agriculture; all which effects are of the most important kind. These consequences will plainly appear if we attend a moment to the progress of product. The farmers receive, in the first place, the total of this amount; out of it they dispense income to the other classes; in rent to the landlords, in the amount of labour to the industrious poor; in rates to the non-industrious poor, and in tithes to the clergy. Their other expenses, in

various instances, maintain many other ranks of people; and the surplus remains for their own profit. . . .

If increasing the product of the soil is a business of such uncommon consequence, it is worth some enquiry to discover the means of doing it. . . . The proper people to be addressed on such a subject are the landlords; it is they alone who can effect improvements; and one method I shall venture to recommend is that of raising rents.

I have heard more than once some of the nobility and gentry, of great landed property, speak with pleasure of their rents not having been raised for many years; *considering it as a point of magnificence to live in the* midst of tenants who are so greatly favoured. There cannot be an idea more pernicious to the public good. I know not an instance of rent being very low, and husbandry at the same time being good. Innumerable are the instances of farmers living wretchedly on farms at very low rents, and succeeded by others on the same land at very high rents, who make fortunes. If land *is* cheap, it will be *held* cheap. . . . It is rare to see land very high let, badly cultivated; indeed, the very circumstance of high rent is a cause of good husbandry, for without it the farmer must be ruined. When men pay dearly for their farms, they learn to value land, and let none of it be lost. . . . I must therefore be allowed to consider it as a maxim, that the first step to increasing the products of the soil, and consequently the general income, from which so many useful effects result, is to raise the rents of the Kingdom to the real value of the land; which would be to raise nine-tenths of England. Much more might be done by the government always keeping the products of the soil at a high price, which is done chiefly by a regular exportation, and a bounty at certain prices.

From HOMER'S "ENQUIRY INTO THE MEANS OF PRESERVING THE PUBLICK ROADS" (1767)

Few people cared to encounter the difficulties which attended the conveyance of goods from the places where they were manufactured, to the markets, where they

were to be disposed of. And those who undertook this business were only enabled to carry it on in the wintry season on horseback, or, if in carriages, by winding deviations from the regular tracks, which the open country afforded them an opportunity of making. Thus the very same cause, which was injurious to Trade, laid waste also a considerable part of our lands. The natural produce of the country was with difficulty circulated to supply the necessities of these counties and trading towns which abounded. Except in a few summer months, it was an almost impracticable attempt to carry very considerable quantities of it to remote places. Hence the consumption of the growth of grain as well as of the inexhaustable stores of fuel, which Nature has lavished upon particular parts of our island, was limited to the neighbourhood of those places which produced them; and made them, comparatively speaking, of little value to what they would have been, had the participation of them been more enlarged.

To the operation of the same cause must also be attributed, in great measure, the slow progress which was formerly made in the improvement of Agriculture. Discouraged by the expense of procuring manure and the uncertain returns, which arose from such confined markets, the farmer wanted both spirit and ability to exert himself in the cultivation of his lands. On this account undertakings in husbandry were then generally small, calculated rather to be a means of subsistence to particular families than a source of wealth to the Public. . . .

The great obstruction to the Reformation, which has been accomplished, was founded upon a principle adopted by gentlemen of property in the country, which experience has since proved to be erroneous as it was selfish; viz., that it would be injurious to their tenants to render the markets in their neighbourhood more accessible to distant farmers, and consequently a diminution of their own estates. It ought for ever to be recorded to the honour of the present century, that it was the first which produced public spirit enough to renounce that

prejudice, and by this circumstance only, to have given as it were, a new birth to the genius of this island. It is owing to the alteration, which has taken place in consequence thereof, that we are now released from treading the cautious steps of our forefathers, and that our very carriages travel with almost winged expedition between every town of consequence in the Kingdom and the Metropolis. By this, as well as the yet more valuable project of increasing inland navigation, a facility of communication is soon likely to be established from every part of the island to the sea, and from the several places in it to each other.

There never was a more astonishing revolution accomplished in the internal system of any country than has been within the compass of a few years in that of England. The carriage of grain, coals, merchandize, etc., is in general conducted with little more than half the number of horses with which it formerly was. Journeys of business are performed with more than double expedition. Improvements in agriculture keep pace with those of trade. Everything wears the face of dispatch; every article of our produce becomes more valuable; and the hinge upon which all these movements turn is the reformation which has been made in our public roads.

1. *Give a clear statement of the advantages and disadvantages of enclosures.*

2. *How far do you agree with Arthur Young's suggestions for improving agriculture?*

3. *Show how good means of communication are absolutely necessary for satisfactory progress.*

PART III

CHAPTER I

STEAM AND MACHINERY

THE latter half of the eighteenth century is one of the most important periods in our national history, for during that time changes were introduced which completely altered social and industrial conditions, and this transformation is commonly known as the Industrial Revolution. Before considering the nature of this rather sudden and very important change, it will be as well to recall some of the facts which have been dealt with in the preceding chapters.

In the first place, it will be clear that the first concern of a community is the provision of the necessaries of life, food and clothing are the primary needs, and so long as people are contented to supply these simple wants for themselves, there is little or no need for commerce, and an agricultural life is the natural one; the manufacture of clothing and other requisites is subsidiary to the main industry of tilling the soil. As the nation advances in civilisation this simple and primitive life is disturbed; wants increase, and efforts are made to satisfy

them; the obvious advantage of exchange of goods with foreign countries leads to the growth of commerce and to the increase of particular industries as a basis for that commerce. This expansion of trade depends entirely upon our ability to produce certain articles which other people cannot produce for themselves, or cannot produce so cheaply or so well. Our ability in this direction depends again upon our natural resources, and upon the intelligence and skill which are brought into action in making the best use of them.

We have already noticed that for some centuries one of the most valuable of the natural resources of England was wool; and this commodity was for a long time the chief source of national wealth and the principal article of commerce. When English people, helped largely by foreigners, began to acquire greater skill in manufactures, an additional source of wealth was added; and the satisfactory growth of the English woollen industry is explained by the excellence of the raw material and the skill of the craftsmen. Under these conditions, of course, most manufactures would flourish, but the woollen trade is especially valuable, for there is naturally a certain and constant demand for cloth

The other textile industries, cotton, linen, and silk, were not so important as wool, chiefly because of the difficulties with regard to the raw material; the silk and linen manufactures were fairly prosperous, though never very extensive, while the value of cotton was not fully realised until the seventeenth century was well advanced.

The two most important processes in the making of cloth are spinning and weaving. Until the advent of the inventions which we are about to describe, the spinning was done by a spinning wheel, one thread being drawn at a time; the weaving was performed in a frame or loom in which every movement had to be effected by the hands or feet of the weaver. If some means could be contrived by which several threads could be made at once, and the movements of the loom could be brought about by mechanical agency, it is plain that a great saving in labour would be effected. Further, if the power and energy required to perform all the operations in the manufacture could be obtained from the forces of nature, without relying entirely upon human strength, another great economy would follow; and a vastly increased production would result from the same amount of labour. These things were actually accomplished during the twenty or thirty years following 1770, and English textile manufactures experienced an extraordinary growth which profoundly affected the whole nation. Other countries were completely out-distanced in this respect; Englishmen showed that they had ingenuity and skill as well as natural advantages; moreover, continental countries were liable to continual political disturbances which interfered with industry; and England gained a long start over the other nations, and became, as it were, the workshop of the world.

The inventions which revolutionised spinning and weaving were first applied to the cotton manufacture, which had been slowly growing in im-

portance, but they were soon applied to the woollen and linen industries as well. In 1770 the spinning-jenny was patented by James Hargreaves; this was a machine by which many threads could be spun at once. In the next year a "water-frame," which further improved the spinning process, was used by Arkwright, and in 1779 both these inventions were combined in the "mule," which was first made by Samuel Crompton, a Bolton spinner. The vast importance of this invention can be realised by the fact that in its modern form one machine can work several thousands of spindles at once. Some time later a similar transformation in the process of weaving resulted from the use of Cartwright's power-loom. This was patented in 1785, but was not used on an extensive scale until the beginning of the nineteenth century.

So far we have seen how the first great stimulus to the increase of textile manufactures came from mechanical inventions. The new machines were at first worked by water-power, and the mills containing them had to be set up by the banks of streams, frequently in places inconveniently situated for markets and workers. But soon the greatest invention of all was applied, and the great Industrial Revolution was fairly started. James Watt had patented his steam-engine as early as 1769; in 1785 it was introduced into the cotton industry, and applied to the power-loom in 1789. The great advantages of steam power were at once seen by the manufacturers, who hastened to build steam factories in any suitable places. The chief consideration now was an adequate supply of coal; and consequently the

new factories were built where that supply was most easily obtainable.

One of the most striking results of the Industrial Revolution was the shifting of the population to the northern counties. Up to this time these districts had been comparatively sparsely inhabited; the agricultural value of the land was not great, and the manufactures had not developed to any very large extent. The chief centres of manufacture, as we have already seen, were the eastern counties and the west of England, where the raw material was produced, and they far surpassed Yorkshire in importance, while the cotton manufacture of Lancashire was insignificant. But as a result of the new manufacturing inventions the necessity arose of placing the industries near the coalfields, and as Lancashire possessed both coal and the moist climate which facilitates some of the processes of the cotton manufacture it speedily became the centre of an enormously increased cotton trade, while the woollen factories of Yorkshire altogether surpassed the older centres.

The use of steam as a motive-power caused a new demand for coal. The smelting of iron by coal and the employment of steam in blast furnaces increased this demand, and the iron industry was revolutionised. Iron was needed for the new machinery, and this development of the coal and iron trades caused a further increase in the population of the coal-producing districts, which rapidly became the most densely-inhabited regions in the country. We shall shortly consider some of the social effects of this mighty revolution.

From "A TOUR THROUGH GREAT BRITAIN," BY DEFOE (1726)

. . . We came to Halifax, where we found the houses thicker and the villages greater; and not only so, but the sides of the hills, which were very steep every way, were spread with houses; for the land being divided into small enclosures, from two acres to six or seven each, seldom more, every three or four pieces of land had a house belonging to them.

In short, after we had mounted the third hill, we found the country one continued village, though every way mountainous, hardly a house standing out of speaking distance from another, and one could see at every house a tenter, and on almost every tenter a piece of cloth, kersey, or shalloon, which are the three articles of this country's labour. At every considerable house was a manufactory. . . . Then, as every clothier must necessarily keep one horse, at least, to fetch home his wool and his provisions from the market; to carry his yarn to the spinners, his manufacture to the fulling-mill, and, when finished, to the market to be sold; so every one generally keeps a cow or two for his family. By this means the small pieces of enclosed land about each house are occupied. As for corn, they scarce grow enough to feed their cocks and hens. Such, it seems, has been the bounty of nature to this county, that two things essential to life, and more particularly to the business followed here, are found in it, and in such a situation as is not to be met with in any part of England, if in the world beside; I mean coals, and running water on the tops of the highest hills. . . This place seems to have been designed by providence for the very purposes to which it is now allotted, for carrying on a manufacture which can nowhere be so easily supplied with the conveniences necessary for it. Nor is the industry of the people wanting to second these advantages. Though we met few people out of doors, yet within one saw the houses full of lusty fellows, some at the dye-vat, some at the loom, others dressing

the cloths; the women and children carding, or spinning; all employed from the youngest to the oldest; scarce anything above four years old but its hands were sufficient for its own support. Not a beggar to be seen, nor an idle person, except here and there in an alms-house, built for those that are ancient and past working. The people in general live long; they enjoy a good air; and under such circumstances hard labour is naturally attended with the blessing of health, if not riches. . . .

In Norfolk we see a face of diligence spread over the whole county; the vast manufactures carried on chiefly by the Norwich weavers employ all the county round in spinning yarn for them; and also use many thousand packs of yarn which they receive from other counties. Norfolk is very populous, and filled with a great number of considerable market towns; most of these towns are very populous and large; but that which is most remarkable is that the whole country round them is interspersed with villages so large, and so full of people, that they are equal to market towns in other counties. An eminent weaver of Norwich gave me a scheme of their trade on this occasion, by which, calculating from the number of looms at that time employed in the city of Norwich only, he made it appear very plain that there were 120,000 people busied in the woollen and silk manufactures of that city only. This shows the wonderful extent of the Norwich manufacture, or stuff-weaving trade, by which so many thousand families are maintained.

From W. RADCLIFFE'S "ORIGIN OF THE NEW SYSTEM OF MANUFACTURE" (1828).

To return to my own division, and to show the immediate effects produced when all hands went to work on machine yarns, I shall confine myself to the families in my own neighbourhood. These families, up to the time I have been speaking of, whether as cottagers or small farmers, had supported themselves by the different occupations I have mentioned in spinning and manufacturing, as their progenitors had done before them.

But the mule now coming into vogue, with an increasing demand for every fabric the loom could produce, put all hands in request, of every age and description. The fabrics made from wool or linen vanished, while the old loom-shops being insufficient, every lumber-room, even old barns, cart-houses, and out-buildings of any description were repaired, windows broken through the old blank walls, and all fitted up for loom-shops. This source of making room being at length exhausted, new weavers' cottages with loom-shops rose in every direction; all immediately filled, and when in full work the weekly circulation of money rose to five times the amount ever before experienced, every family bringing home weekly 40, 60, 80, 100, or even 120 shillings per week. . . . The operative weavers on machine yarns, both as cottagers and small farmers, even with three times their former rents, might be truly said to be placed in a higher state of wealth, peace, and godliness, by the great demand for, and high price of, their labour than they had ever before experienced. Their dwellings and small gardens clean and neat, all the family well clad, the men with each a watch in his pocket, the women dressed to their own fancy. I was intimately acquainted with the families I am speaking of in my youth, and though they were then in my employ, yet, when they brought in their work, a sort of familiarity continued to exist between us, which, in those days, was the case between all masters and men.

1. *Discuss as far as you can the drawbacks which would be experienced in the domestic system of manufacture.*

2. *What benefits was the introduction of machinery and steam-power likely to confer upon employers, work-people, and consumers?*

3. *Explain precisely why Halifax prospered, while Norwich declined, during the century following Defoe's tour.*

CHAPTER II

WAR AND THE NATION

WAR is one of the most familiar features of history. It occurs so frequently, its incidents are so picturesque and interesting, that we are often inclined to forget that it is essentially a wasteful, destructive thing, generally arising from ill-will, jealousy, thirst for fame, or some other selfish desire or ambition. England has not suffered from the ravages of war to nearly the same extent as other European countries, but has taken part in a considerable number of wars, many of them fought in foreign lands and on the sea. In the Middle Ages these wars were almost invariably brought about by the ambition of monarchs or the restless spirit of the nobility; and there was the great Civil War of the seventeenth century, when a section of the people, headed by Cromwell, made a forcible attempt to reform the Government. But from the time of the Renaissance, of which we have spoken earlier, the usual reason for engaging in war with foreign countries was the idea of promoting our national prosperity; and the prevailing impression was that we, as a nation, could prosper only at the expense of somebody else. It seems almost as if the rulers

and statesmen of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries thought that only a certain sum total of progress was possible, and that we could obtain a satisfactory amount only by depriving others of their share. Since it was seen that material prosperity depended largely upon the expansion of manufactures and trade, every effort was made to secure advantages in these respects by restricting and limiting the activities of other nations as far as possible. The Navigation Acts were intended to destroy the carrying trade of Holland; wars were undertaken with France during the eighteenth century under various pretexts, but the real reason is sufficiently shown by the fact that by the year 1763 England had deprived France of practically all her territory and power in America and in India. All the other European countries either were unimportant in trade and commerce or were rendered useless by internal struggles and disputes. Thus England fought for and obtained a position of supremacy by the process of crippling her only serious rivals and preventing foreign competition.

Now let us examine the effect of these wars on the people of England. The wars were, of course, very costly, and had to be paid for by the wealth and by the labour of the whole country. But the intention was that the country should ultimately gain by having obtained the possession of a sole market; and while securing colonies Englishmen had a very definite idea as to their value; they were to be exploited for the benefit of English manufacturers and merchants. Manufactures in

the colonies were suppressed or discouraged, and foreign countries were not allowed to send them goods. This policy, as might be expected, was not appreciated either by the colonists or by foreigners, and served to increase international jealousy and ill-feeling; but the immediate and obvious effect certainly was satisfactory from the point of view of English traders, and manufactures and commerce received a considerable stimulus.

But this theory of progress, depending as it did upon protective and restrictive measures, provoked the hostility of those whose interests were interfered with; the colonists in America continually evaded the laws which were passed to limit their trade, and carried on a fairly extensive commerce with other parts of America. When the English Government attempted to stop this, and in addition endeavoured to compel the colonists to pay taxes without granting them a voice in the arrangement of the system of taxation, the colonists protested vigorously. The English Government, however, insisted that it had the right to control the commercial affairs of the colonists, and to impose taxes upon them. This insistence by the Government and the determined opposition of the colonists brought about a state of war, and as a result the colonies obtained their independence in 1783.

In the struggle France took the opportunity of helping the Americans against the English, and the conflict was a continuation of the fight for commercial supremacy which had really commenced at the beginning of the century. From 1789 the situation

was complicated by the French Revolution; the masses of France revolted against the tyranny and misgovernment of their rulers, and set up a popular government, which, however, proved hostile to England. The old ill-will and jealousy continued, and when out of the chaos and confusion the figure of Napoleon emerged to consolidate the French nation and lead its ambitions and aspirations, England had to enter upon a prolonged and severe conflict which tried her resources to the uttermost. At length the combat was ended, and in 1815 peace was restored by the final defeat of Napoleon.

During this terrible struggle an incalculable amount of energy, wealth, and life was wasted, and all classes, in all the countries of Europe, were the poorer for it. Although the new industrial system was getting into good working order, and the manufactures of the country were making enormous progress, all the wealth thus produced could hardly have paid the expenses of the war. Taxes were increased, new means of taxation were continually being devised, and a huge debt remained, which we have been paying off ever since. But bad as matters were, they might have been worse; the war was never carried into our own country, so that no disturbance or interruption interfered with our manufactures; the navy protected the merchant vessels and enabled our carrying trade to continue and flourish; and no efforts of our enemies could destroy these sources of wealth. During the whole course of the war our exports steadily mounted up, and at its close we were in a most favourable

condition, for we were the only nation in Europe able to continue extensive manufacturing and commercial operations.

In summing up the effect of these wars upon the nation, we may say then that in return for our immense expenditure in life and treasure we gained commercial supremacy. We must also say that the loss was borne chiefly by the poorer classes of the country, while the profit came in the first place to the landowners and the capitalist manufacturers. Very many of the workers were, in fact, in a very sad plight during the whole course of the Industrial Revolution and the war, and at the time of the French Revolution there were many who advocated following the example of the lower classes of France in overthrowing the Government. The distress and discontent which prevailed all over England, more particularly towards the close of the war, and for some considerable time afterwards, arose partly from the generally impoverished condition of the country owing to the great drain which the war had made upon its resources; but it was also caused by the unequal distribution of the burden; the new conditions of industry made it possible for that part of the country's wealth which was produced by the labour of the people to be acquired by a comparatively small number of capitalists, between whom and the workpeople there was little sympathy. In order to understand how this state of things came about in regard to that part of the population which was engaged in manufacture, we must devote some attention to the growth of the factory system.

From ADAM SMITH'S "WEALTH OF NATIONS" (1776)

The single advantage which monopoly procures to a single order of men, is in many different ways hurtful to the general interest of the country.

To found a great empire for the sole purpose of raising up a people of customers, may at first sight appear a project fit only for a nation of shopkeepers. It is, however, a project altogether unfit for a nation of shopkeepers; but extremely fit for a nation whose government is influenced by skopkeepers. Such statesmen, and such statesmen only, are capable of fancying that they will find some advantage in employing the blood and treasure of their fellow-citizens to found and maintain such an empire. . . . The maintenance of monopoly has hitherto been the principal, or more properly perhaps the sole end and purpose of the dominion which Great Britain assumes over her colonies.

From REINHARD'S "HISTORY OF THE STATE OF THE COMMERCE OF GREAT BRITAIN" (Translated 1805)

He who doubts the advanced flourishing condition of the British commerce and the wealth of the nation, may easily convince himself of his error, merely by comparing the former and present English Custom-house entries, the list of imports and exports, and the amount of the duties which they necessarily occasion; to this ought to be added that the English are now in possession of the greater part of the commerce of the world, and by these means have it in their power to fix the standard price of almost every commodity. They have besides this, immediately after the commencement of the present war, captured from the French and Dutch great numbers of ships with rich cargoes, the amount of which is estimated to exceed £14,000,000 sterling.

Allowing that the other commercial nations who are competitors with the English in trade all over the world, even felt themselves inclined to undersell the English in their prices, it would, in the first place, be

incompatible with their interests; in the second, it is out of their power to supply all nations sufficiently, out of the scantiness of their stores. The English possess quantities immensely larger than they do, and barter them for the produce of their manufactures; which is generally the case in every corner of the globe. There is scarcely a single commodity, a single article either of luxury or convenience, that is not manufactured by the English, with the most consummate skill and in the highest state of perfection.

The soil of Britain does not indeed produce a quantity of corn sufficient for the exigencies of its inhabitants; and for this reason it becomes necessary, every year, to remit large sums of money for its purchase to the ports in the Baltic; but then nature has indemnified that country with her rich coal mines, the envy of foreigners, who by this means become, in a certain manner, tributary to England; for the English parliament has laid a considerable duty on the exportation of coals, which foreign nations are obliged to pay.

A nation whose active commerce is so preponderating, compared with its passive trade, who is herself the ruler of the most numerous and fertile colonies in all parts of the world; a nation that sends the produce of her industry to every zone; that has so formidable a navy, and so widespread a navigation; a nation that, by her activity and the genius of her citizens, manufactures its numberless articles of merchandise, infinitely finer, in much superior workmanship, in far more exquisite goodness, than all other nations, without exception; and that is able to make them infinitely cheaper, owing to her admirable engines, her machines, and her native coal; a nation, whose credit and whose capital is so immense as that of England; surely such a nation must render all foreigners tributary; and her very enemies must help to bear the immense burthen of her debt, and the enormous accumulation of her taxes.

The commerce of France and Holland is at present almost totally suspended by the blockade of most of their ports. Both countries are totally cut off from

their possessions in the East Indies, and are allowed to carry on but a very insignificant trade with their West Indies Colonies. How then can these two powers wage war with the produce of their commercial dealings as England does? England alone has room, notwithstanding the harbours that are shut against her, on the extensive globe, and the vast oceans that surround it. . . .

What then will be the end of this new war, carried on with so much fury? What are the catastrophes which will at last give back peace, and appease enraged minds? No mortal will dare to give a decisive answer to these questions. But the attentive observer of the history of his time is, however, at liberty to take a view of matters of fact, and of the resources of the contending parties, from which he may deduce tolerably accurate conclusions.

1. *Discuss the gains and losses which England would have experienced by abstaining from war during the eighteenth century.*

2. *What is your opinion of the general policy of trade monopoly which prevailed during this time?*

3. *Describe briefly the commercial advantages which were secured to England at the time of the writing of the last extract.*

CHAPTER III

THE FACTORY SYSTEM

It will be remembered that, before the great inventions which revolutionised manufacture in England, the textile industries were carried on under the domestic system; spinning and weaving were done in the cottages of the workpeople, who were often engaged in agriculture as well. But with the introduction of machinery driven by water-power and later by steam, it became necessary to do the work in factories. The factory system had, of course, great advantages; it was infinitely more economical; the amount of labour required to produce the finished article was very much less than it had been before, and consequently the production was greatly increased. The supply did not increase at a greater rate than the demand, for with the new machinery and cheaper cost of manufacture our stocks of cloth found a ready sale; and during the great wars with which Napoleon distracted the continent, while England remained undisturbed, it might almost be said that we clothed Europe; even our enemies were glad to buy from us the goods which we could make so much better than they could.

But the new order of things involved changes

which were anything but advantageous to some o the people concerned in manufacture; and it wa quite a long time before the evils of the factory system were fully realised and any attempts made towards improvement. First of all, those who had been accustomed all their lives to work by hand and who could not or would not adapt themselves to the new machinery, found their means of livelihood taken away. Their work was no longer wanted, and for a time the distress arising from this cause was very great. The hand-workers frequently attempted to destroy the new machines, which they blamed as the origin of their troubles. It was not until the generation of hand-workers had passed away altogether that this source of complaint was entirely removed.

Another result of the factory system was the growth of accumulation of capital in the hands of the owners of the factories. Of course the capitalist had not been unknown before this period; there had been capitalists, for instance, in agriculture; those landlords who had enclosed their lands and worked them as large farms, instead of on the common field system, were in a sense capitalists. But with the factory system of industry it was now quite essential that the control should be in the hands of men who were furnished with the means of constructing the buildings and providing the machinery; and these were men who were clever enough to take advantage of the new inventions. Many of them became extremely wealthy and powerful, and shortly began to make their influence felt in the government of the country. The im-

portant point to notice is that the workpeople were now practically dependent upon the capitalist employer. They were under the necessity of going to his factory, working under whatever conditions he chose to provide, for whatever wages they could get—and so long as there was a plentiful supply of labour the wages were by no means high. If the employers were selfish, greedy men, it is plain that the new system would involve the risk of many serious evils; and this was actually the case.

Under the domestic system the worker provided his own conditions; he could work as long as he pleased, whenever he found the most suitable time; his workshop was his own home, which he could look after for himself. It must not, of course, be supposed that his lot was invariably a happy one; often his work was arduous and prolonged, and the payment was never excessive. But he was to a large extent his own master. Under the new system all this was changed; as a general rule, the workpeople had to herd together in unhealthy towns; they had to work in factories where cleanliness, health, and comfort were the last things to be considered; their employers regarded them merely as so many "hands" to work the machines, and very often had not the slightest interest in their welfare. Moreover, the old family life was practically destroyed, for much of the work in factories could be done by women and children.

This was the worst evil which the factory system brought in its train. The wages of parents were often brought to such a low point that they were

practically compelled to supplement their earnings by those of their children; one of the primary objects of the capitalist employers was to obtain their labour as cheaply as possible; consequently they made extensive use of child-labour, and were responsible for a terrible amount of misery. It is easy, of course, to blame the parents for allowing their children to be exploited in this way; but, although some parents doubtless allowed their children to suffer unnecessarily, many were simply forced into the arrangement. Some of the employers, however, could not obtain a sufficient supply of cheap child-labour in the neighbourhood of their factories, and instituted a horrible practice of procuring pauper children from the workhouses all over England, under the pretence of "apprenticing" them to the trade. This was the cheapest labour of all, for no wages were given to the poor wretches, who were often treated worse than slaves. It must be remembered that there was no restriction whatever on the employers; the "apprentices" were completely in their power; there was no limit to the hours of labour, and the children were frequently goaded on to their work, when utterly exhausted, by blows and other punishment.

It must not be imagined that this state of things was universal. The ill-effects of the crowding of the workers into towns and of the control of the industries by capitalist employers were, of course, found in all the manufacturing districts, principally in Lancashire and Yorkshire, which were the chief centres of the cotton and woollen manufactures; but the cruel treatment of children was not practised

in every factory; the great evil was that such a thing should be possible; and before very long something had to be done to prevent unscrupulous employers gaining their wealth by such dreadful means. They argued that any restrictions would be injurious to trade, that it was better to leave things alone, and allow matters to develop without interference by the State. But sensible people saw that the well-being of the community was of more importance than the profits of manufacturers, and by degrees the most glaring of the evils of the factory system were abolished.

From the REPORT OF A ROYAL COMMISSION OF 1833

The children employed in all the principal branches of manufacture throughout the kingdom work the same number of hours as the adults.

The effects of labour during such hours are, in a great number of cases, permanent deterioration of the physical constitution; the production of diseases wholly irremediable; and the partial or entire seclusion (by reason of excessive fatigue) from the means of obtaining adequate education, and acquiring useful habits, or of profiting by those means when afforded.

At the age when children suffer those injuries from the labour they undergo, they are not free agents, but are let out on hire, the wages they earn being secured and appropriated by parents and guardians.

We are therefore of opinion that a case is made out for the interference of the legislature on behalf of the children employed in factories.

From "THE CURSE OF THE FACTORY SYSTEM," BY JOHN FIELDEN, M.P. (1836)

The Commissioners have given a short summary in pp. 26 to 28 of their report, of the "Effects of Factory

Labour on Children," from which I make the extracts following. It is taken, it appears, from the mouths of the children themselves, their parents, and their overlookers.

The account of the child, when questioned, is:

"Sick-tired, especially in the winter nights; so tired she can do nothing; feels so tired she throws herself down when she gangs home, not caring what she does; often much tired, and feels sore, standing so long on her legs; often so tired she could not eat her supper; night and morning very tired."

Another speaks in this way:

"Many a time has been so fatigued that she could hardly take off her clothes at night, or put them on in the morning; her mother would be raging at her, because when she sat down she could not get up again through the house; thinks they are in bondage; not much better than the Israelites in Egypt, and life no pleasure to them; so tired that she can't eat her supper, nor wake of herself."

The Commissioners say the evidence of parents is generally this:

"Her children come home so tired and worn out they can hardly eat their supper; has often seen her daughter come home so fatigued that she would go to bed supperless; has seen young workers absolutely oppressed, and unable to sit down or rise up."

They say that the evidence of the overlooker is:

"Children are very often tired and stifflike; have known children hide themselves in the stove among the wool, so that they should not go home when the work is over; have seen six or eight fetched out of the stove and beat home; beat out of the mill, however; they hide because too tired to go home."

Again an overlooker says:

"Many a one I have had to rouse, when the work is very slack, from fatigue; the children very much aded when worked late at night; the children bore the long hours very ill indeed; after working eight or nine or ten hours, they were nearly ready to faint;

some were asleep; some were only kept awake by being spoke to, or by a little chastisement, to make them jump up. I was obliged to chastise them when they were almost fainting, and it hurt my feelings; then they would spring up and work pretty well for another hour; but the last two or three hours was my hardest work, for they then got so exhausted."

A spinner says:

"I find it difficult to keep my piecers awake the last hours of a winter's evening; have seen them fall asleep, and go on performing their work with their hands while they were asleep, after the billey had stopped, when their work was over; I have stopped and looked at them for two minutes, going through the motions of piecening when they were fast asleep, when there was no work to do, and they were doing nothing; children at night are so fatigued that they are asleep often as soon as they sit down, so that it is impossible to wake them to sense enough to wash themselves, or to eat a bit of supper, being so stupid in sleep."

In alluding to the cruelty of parents, who suffer their children to be overworked in factories for their own gain, as spoken of in the Report of the Board of Health in Manchester, and above-quoted, the Commissioners say that "It is not wholly unknown in the West Riding of Yorkshire for parents to carry their children to the mills in the morning on their backs, and carry them back again at night."

And, further, that

"It appears in evidence that sometimes the sole consideration by which parents are influenced in making choice of a person under whom to place their children, is the amount of wages, not the mode of treatment, to be secured to them."

From the Report of a Royal Commission (1840)

[A witness stated in his evidence] Factory labour is much more advantageous to the manufacturer than domestic labour. The domestic weaver is apt to be irregular in his habits, because he does not work under

the eye of a master. At any moment the domestic weaver can throw down his shuttle, and convert the rest of the day into a holiday; or busy himself with some more profitable task; but the factory weaver works under superintendence; if absent a day, without sufficient cause, he is dismissed, and his place supplied by one of greater power of application. . . .

With regard to health, having seen the domestic weaver in his miserable apartments, and the power-loom weaver in the factory, I do not hesitate to say that the advantages are all on the side of the latter. The one, if a steady workman, confines himself to a single room, in which he eats, drinks, and sleeps, and breathes throughout the day an impure air. The other has not only the exercise of walking to and fro from the factory, but, when there, lives and breathes in a large roomy apartment, in which the air is constantly changed. The reason of the better morals of the factory hands was said to be regularity of hours; regularity therefore of habits and constant superintendence through the great part of the day. I believe that journeymen tailors, journeymen shoemakers, domestic weavers, and all classes employed at piecework, at their own homes, will be found to yield more readily to the temptations of idleness and intemperance than the classes who have to attend a warehouse or shop, or to work in a factory.

A Petition from Mill-owners (1836)

To the Right Honourable the Lords of His Majesty's Privy Council for Trade, etc., etc.

The Memorial of the under-signed Mill-owners, Occupiers of Mills, Master-Spinners and Manufacturers of the Township of Oldham, in the County of Lancaster.

Showeth,

That an Act of Parliament was made and passed in the third and fourth years of the reign of his present Majesty, entitled "An Act to regulate the labour of

children and young persons in the Mills and Factories of the United Kingdom."

That the eighth section of the said Act enacts "That after the expiration of thirty months from the passing of such Act it shall not be lawful for any person whatsoever to employ, keep, or allow to remain, in any factory or mill for a longer period than forty-eight hours in any one week, any child who shall not have completed his or her thirteenth year of age."

That your Memorialists are looking forward with great anxiety and alarm to the situation in which they will be placed on the first day of March next, by the working of children under thirteen years of age being restricted to forty-eight hours in one week, for that such restriction will have the effect of throwing all children under thirteen years of age wholly out of employment, and will render it impossible for your Memorialists to work their respective mills with advantage, in proof whereof your Memorialists confidently appeal to the Factory Inspectors of this district for the truth of their assertion.

That your Memorialists are far from wishing a total repeal of the provisions of the said Factory Act, but humbly submit that it is absolutely necessary to the carrying on of the cotton trade with advantage to allow the employment of children of eleven years of age for sixty-nine hours a week.

From "FACTORIES AND THE FACTORY SYSTEM," W. C. TAYLOR (1844)

Infant labour, as it is erroneously called,—or the juvenile labour, as it should be called—in factories, is in fact a national blessing, and absolutely necessary for the support of the manifold fiscal burdens which have been placed upon the industry of this country. It is quite sufficient to say that the children of these operatives have mouths, and must be fed; they have limbs, and must be clothed; they have minds, which ought to be instructed; and they have passions, which must be controlled. Now, if the parents are unable to provide

these requisites—and their inability to do so is just as notorious as their existence—it becomes absolutely necessary that the children should aid in obtaining them for themselves. . . . The Factory Act has injured the operatives, and they know it. When children under thirteen years of age were dismissed from the mills, young persons above that age came readily to supply their places from Wales, Scotland, Ireland, and the agricultural counties because the wages of factory labour are far above those of farm labour. We have conversed with many of these persons, and we never found one of them that regretted abandoning agricultural labour, or had the slightest intention of returning to farming pursuits. The operatives who had been deluded into raising a clamour for the Factory Bill found, to their great mortification, that they had deprived their own children of employment to give it to strangers, and that they had besides brought in a new generation of operatives who would soon compete with themselves in the labour market. Juvenile labour, then, is demonstrably beneficial to the parents of the children by contributing to their support, and by placing them in a position where they are safer from the allurements of vice. It is advantageous to the children, by training them to those habits of industry by which they are to gain support in future life.

1. *Who do you consider were to blame for the condition of things indicated in these passages with respect to child-labour?*

2. *What is your opinion of the arguments which were used in its favour?*

3. *Compare the factory and domestic systems of industry in respect to their effect on the adult, or grown-up, worker.*

CHAPTER IV

POVERTY, PAUPERISM, AND MISERY

DURING the last few years of the eighteenth century, and the first half of the nineteenth, the condition of the workers of England was probably as bad as it has ever been in the whole of our history. It is important to understand why, with an ever-increasing volume of trade and wealth, this state of things could have arisen. The population of the country could be considered as comprising, roughly, four main classes; the agricultural labourers, the artisans engaged in manufacture, the capitalist manufacturers, and the owners and holders of the land. Now the material interests of these classes appeared to be mutually opposed; the employers could gain more wealth by overworking and underpaying their workpeople; the landowners could obtain higher rents by raising the price of corn; and it is quite certain that large numbers of employers and landowners did deliberately and consciously endeavour to make themselves wealthy by the oppression of the poorer classes—for such methods cannot be described by any other name.

We have seen that many of the manufacturers, in their haste to get rich, obtained the cheapest labour possible, and this led to a deplorable amount

of child-labour, accompanied frequently by horrible cruelty and ill-treatment; moreover, the artisans had lost their old independence and were entirely under the control of the capitalist employers. The people in the country were in no better plight; the landowners and farmers shared in the prevalent eagerness to become rich, and this was to be accomplished by obtaining the highest possible prices for their produce, and at the same time paying out the least possible amount in wages. The rates of wages were often assessed by local justices, themselves employers of labour; the rates became lower and lower, while the cost of living tended to increase. The home production of corn was often really insufficient to meet the needs of the rapidly growing population, but heavy taxes were placed upon foreign corn imported into the country, in order to keep up the price of English corn for the benefit of the farmers and landowners. The wages of the labourers were reduced to such a point that it was quite impossible to live on them; and the practice was commenced, about 1795, of giving poor relief out of the rates to supplement the meagre earnings of the labourers. A man's wages might be as low as six or seven shillings a week, and an allowance would be made to him, according to the size of his family. This was a device to shift the cost of the wages on to the whole community, or at any rate, to the whole body of rate-payers, so that part of the upkeep of labourers was provided by those who did not employ them at all. The effect of this allowance system was demoralising in the extreme; employers of labour further cut down wages to

starvation rates, and workpeople were forced to apply for parish relief. This meant that they became "paupers"; all their self-respect was lost, and there was no inducement for them to work hard, or even to work at all.

This pauperisation of the working classes was fairly widespread over the whole country; the expenditure on poor relief went up by leaps and bounds, and ultimately the matter became so serious that some attempt had to be made to bring about improvement by legislation. The new Poor Law of 1834 reduced to a considerable extent the burden of pauperism, and was one of a series of enactments which the new social conditions demanded. Much of the activity of Parliament had to be devoted to the consideration of the best methods of grappling with the problems which the Industrial Revolution had created, and we shall shortly consider these legislative reforms; it was during the transition stage, while the changes were progressing, before their exact nature had been properly realised, that the misery and degradation of the people reached such a deplorable depth.

The great war with France was responsible at first for much of the poverty. Although trade increased, the national expenses were colossal, and the taxes which were imposed to meet part of the cost fell on the poor as well as the rich; bread, boots, salt—such necessaries as these were taxed in the attempt to raise funds. But the common people felt that the nation was fighting practically for its very existence, and with a patriotic spirit they patiently suffered the burden in the hope that

peace would bring better times; but when at length it arrived, it brought little or no relief to the general misery; in fact it almost appears as if the early years of the peace increased the sufferings of the masses. A large number of men who had been employed in the war were suddenly thrown out of employment; the continental countries were more impoverished even than England, and were unable to buy English goods; and the general discontent was rendered the more bitter since there had been a universal expectation of improvement after the war was over, and the disappointment was keen to the point of resentment.

The people could only express their feelings by violent action. They could not make their voice heard in Parliament, for they were voteless; when actually driven to desperation they would commit deeds of destruction in the hope that their rulers would be frightened into action. The discontent of agricultural labourers often expressed itself by the burning of ricks and farm buildings; the anger of the artisans was vented in riots and the destruction of machinery. These were the only means they had of showing their dissatisfaction; some of them tried to organise themselves into combinations for the purpose of strengthening their position; but Parliament feared that the unions would become too powerful, and forbade their formation.

This is a very gloomy picture of the England of a century ago; but gradually the situation became less hopeless. The general sense of the community could not long tolerate such a condition of things; many earnest and devoted men set themselves to

urge and bring about improvements; and although at first some of the sufferers were inclined towards violent methods, the more thoughtful of them perceived that the root of all their evils was planted in bad government, and that the remedy was to be found in a sounder legislation.

From "THE STATE OF THE POOR," BY SIR F. EDEN (1795)

East Riding of Yorkshire.—Neighbourhood of Hornsey.—Common wages, with diet, from Martinmas to Lady-day, 5s. the week; ditto from Lady-day to Midsummer, 6s.; ditto, from Midsummer to Michaelmas, 9s.; ditto, from Michaelmas to Martinmas, 6s. Common wages, without diet, 9s. the week in winter; and 12s. in summer. In harvest, men receive 12s. and 14s. the week and victuals; and women, 6s. and 7s. the week, with beer, but no meat. There is very constant employment in the winter. The labourers are, in general, supplied by their employers with corn, etc., much below the market price. The rents of cottages vary according to the quantity of land annexed; and are from £1 to £1, 10s. Many of the cottages on this coast are miserable hovels, built of mud and straw. Such habitations are sometimes granted by the parish to poor families; and sometimes the parishes supply their poor inhabitants with fuel. Many cottagers cultivate potatoes in their garths and gardens; some have a pig; and a few keep cows. . . .

From the preceding statements the reader will, I trust, be enabled to form some general idea of the present condition and circumstances of the labouring classes of the community. That they have, during the last two years, been subjected to great distress, from a rise, unexampled within the present century, in the price of the necessaries of life, everyone will readily acknowledge. It is not, however, from a view of their situation in a period of scarcity that we are to estimate the compara-

tive ability of a man to support himself by his labour, in modern and in ancient times. Still less is a period of war to be selected as the moment of ascertaining the ordinary comforts and gratifications of the peasant or working manufacturer. It does not fall within my plan to enter into minute comparative estimates relative to the progress of society in England; but there can be little doubt that the ten years ending in January 1793 exhibit the most flattering appearances, in every circumstance that has been considered, by political economists, as demonstrative of national posperity. The demand for employment, and a consequent advance in income, have risen in a progressive ratio; and to those who investigate the state of the country, without a disposition to blame the present and admire the past, which too often influences even persons endued with the profoundest judgment and most extensive learning, both these and other symptoms of increasing industry and wealth must have been perfectly satisfactory. It may, indeed, be contended that the rapid advance in the poor's rate is an unequivocal proof of the inability of labourers to maintain themselves on the ordinary wages of labour. But before this can be admitted, it should be proved that more persons are maintained by the present poor's rate, which probably exceeds three millions sterling, than were by half that sum twenty years ago. Even allowing this to be the fact, it by no means proves that the able-bodied labourer, whom it has been the fashion of late years, upon benevolent, though mistaken, principles of policy, to quarter on the parish, would if unassisted by the overseer have been unable to benefit himself, whilst his employer was getting riches by his labour.

From the REPORT OF THE SELECT COMMITTEE ON LABOURERS' WAGES (1824)

There are but two motives by which men are induced to work; the one, the hope of improving the condition of themselves and their families; the other, the fear of punishment. The one is the principle of free labour,

the other the principle of slave labour. The one produces industry, frugality, sobriety, family affection, and puts the labouring class in a friendly relation with the rest of the community; the other causes, as certainly, idleness, imprudence, vice, dissension, and places the master and the labourer in a perpetual state of jealousy and mistrust. Unfortunately, it is the tendency of the system of which we speak to supersede the former of these principles, and introduce the latter. Subsistence is secured to all; to the idle as well as the industrious; to the profligate as well as the sober; and, as far as human interests are concerned, all inducement to obtain a good character is taken away. The effects have corresponded with the cause. Able-bodied men are found slovenly at their work, and dissolute in their hours of relaxation; a father is negligent of his children; the children do not think it necessary to contribute to the support of their parents; the employers and the employed are engaged in perpetual quarrels, and the pauper, always relieved, is always discontented; crime advances with increasing boldness, and the parts of the country where this system prevails are, in spite of our gaols and our laws, filled with poachers and thieves.

From a SPEECH BY LORD BYRON (1812)

During the short time I recently passed in Nottinghamshire, not more than twelve hours elapsed without some fresh act of violence; and on the day I left the county I was informed that forty frames had been broken the preceding evening, as usual, without resistance and without detection.

Such was then the state of that county, and such I have reason to believe it to be at this moment. But whilst these outrages must be admitted to exist to an alarming extent, it cannot be denied that they have arisen from circumstances of the most unparalleled distress; the perseverance of these miserable men in their proceedings tends to prove that nothing but absolute want could have driven a large, and once honest and industrious, body of the people into the commission

of excesses, so hazardous to themselves, their families, and the community. At the time to which I allude, the town and county were burdened with large detachments of the military; the police were in motion, the magistrates assembled; yet all the movements, civil and military, had led to—nothing. Not a single instance had occurred of the apprehension of any real delinquent actually taken in the fact, against whom there existed legal evidence sufficient for conviction. But the police, however useless, were by no means idle; several notorious delinquents had been detected—men, liable to conviction, on the clearest evidence, of the capital crime of poverty; men, who had been nefariously guilty of lawfully begetting several children, whom, thanks to the times! they are unable to maintain. Considerable injury has been done to the proprietors of the improved frames. These machines were to them an advantage, inasmuch as they superseded the necessity of employing a number of workmen who were left in consequence to starve. By the adoption of one species of frame in particular, one man performed the work of many, and the superfluous labourers were thrown out of employment. Yet it is to be observed that the work thus executed was inferior in quality; not marketable at home, and merely hurried over with a view of exportation. It was called, in the cant of the trade, by the name of "Spider Work." The rejected workmen, in the blindness of their ignorance, instead of rejoicing at these improvements in arts so beneficial to mankind, conceived themselves to be sacrificed to improvements in mechanism. In the foolishness of their hearts they imagined that the maintenance and well-doing of the industrious poor were objects of greater consequence than the enrichment of a few individuals by any improvement, in the implements of trade, which threw the workmen out of employment, and rendered the labourer unworthy of his hire.

When we are told that these men are leagued together not only for the destruction of their own comfort, but of their means of subsistence, can we forget that it is

the bitter policy, the destructive warfare of the last eighteen years, which has destroyed their comfort, your comfort, all men's comfort? That policy which, originating with "great statesmen now no more," has survived the dead to become a curse on the living, unto the third and fourth generation! These men never destroyed their looms till they were become useless, worse than useless; till they were become actual impediments to their exertions in obtaining their daily bread. Can you, then, wonder that in times like these, when bankruptcy, convicted fraud, and imputed felony are found in a station not far beneath that of your Lordships, the lowest, though once most useful portion of the people, should forget their duty in their distresses, and become only less guilty than one of their representatives? But while the exalted offender can find means to baffle the law, new capital punishments must be devised, new snares of death must be spread for the wretched mechanic who is famished into guilt. These men were willing to dig, but the spade was in other hands; they were not ashamed to beg, but there was none to relieve them; their own means of subsistence were cut off, all other employments preoccupied; and their excesses, however to be deplored and condemned, can hardly be subject of surprise.

1. *In what particular respects do you think that the condition of the poor in* 1795 *was capable of improvement?*

2. *Describe the system to which reference is made in the Report of* 1824.

3. *Explain carefully why the outrages alluded to by Lord Byron broke out, and say what you think was the duty of the Government.*

CHAPTER V

LABOUR MOVEMENTS

The Industrial Revolution completely changed the position and prospects of the workpeople. Up to this time industries were carried on in a simple fashion, and every artisan, if he were sufficiently diligent and skilful, might become a master workman, there was no great necessity for workpeople to unite to protect themselves against their masters. But with the enormous increase in manufactures, the improvements in machinery and the employment of steam power, the control of capital became absolutely necessary for employers, and most workmen now found themselves in the position of being practically certain that they could never be anything more than workmen all their lives. Consequently we find that there is a tendency for them to combine, in order to safeguard their interests against their employers. It was becoming very difficult for wages to be regulated, as of old, by the local magistrates, and all attempts at State interference in determining the rates of wages were gradually given up. But, at the same time, it was regarded as dangerous that combinations of workpeople should be formed; it was considered that it would be disastrous if the artisans obtained such

power by their unions that they would be able to control their own rates of pay; therefore Acts of Parliament were passed, about the beginning of the nineteenth century, definitely forbidding trade combinations. In fact, the workpeople were plainly told that the State would not assist them in regulating wages, and that they were not to be allowed to help themselves. It is not surprising, therefore, that great discontent prevailed.

In 1824 successful efforts were made to repeal the laws against trade combinations; but a number of strikes followed, and Parliament, quite alarmed by this result, once more placed restrictions upon workmen's unions. But as Parliament consisted largely of landowners, who were no friends of the capitalists opposing the artisans, these restrictions were not as rigid as before, and unions increased in number. Some of the leaders of the workers believed in separate unions for particular trades, while others favoured the formation of one immense national combination. The former proved the more satisfactory arrangement, and numerous unions were formed, closely watched all the time by the Government, which could not shake off its fear that these combinations were really dangerous things.

Gradually the trade unions increased in efficiency, in power, in value, and in membership. The separate unions remained distinct, while they might join forces and render mutual assistance when advisable. Many of them devoted considerable attention to the encouragement of the general and technical education of their members, and all of them endeavoured to secure fair pay and good conditions,

at the same time doing their best to ensure that every member was a properly qualified workman. The advantages to trade unionists of united action are, of course, very obvious, and mainly by means of their chief weapon, the strike, they have succeeded in achieving considerable improvements in wages and conditions.

The progress of trade unions has been briefly outlined as showing the effect of the Industrial Revolution upon the attitude of the workpeople of the country. At first it took them, as it were, by surprise; they found themselves living in a turmoil of new and strange circumstances, the reason and effect of which they could not properly appreciate; workers in the towns saw trade increase to an almost incredible extent, workers in the country saw the productiveness of the land increase four or five fold, and yet they themselves were poor and wretched. No wonder that in their ignorance and misery they blamed the new things, the mechanical inventions, the enclosures, all these novelties which in themselves were excellent, but from which they derived no benefit.

As time passed and it became clear that the new systems of manufacture and agriculture had come to stay, it became necessary to take things as they were, to accept the altered conditions, and find the best means of dealing with them. The idea of using force, of obtaining redress of grievances by violence or rebellion, was never very popular with Englishmen as a whole; it seems to be part of the national character to trust to peaceful means, and although there were a few desperate attempts at

rganised revolt, wiser counsels [illegible] ailed, and the possibility of effecting improvements by other and quieter methods was at length perceived.

It must not be supposed that the discontent of the people was not shared by others in more fortunate circumstances; although the majority of the landowners and manufacturers seemed to care nothing for the troubles of the poorer classes, there were some who were moved by the prevalent distress, and used their best efforts to bring about some amelioration. It is rather remarkable that one of the first evidences of this spirit of philanthropy was the liberation in 1833, at enormous cost, of the slaves in the British dominions across the sea; this was, of course, a very good thing; but the feelings of thousands of English people, who were living almost in conditions of slavery, must have been very bitter at the preference shown to negroes and the neglect which they themselves suffered.

After all, the most satisfactory feature is to be found in the fact that the sturdy self-reliance of Englishmen came to the rescue; they saw that their salvation lay in their own hands; that they must unite against those who wished to oppress them; that they must seek power in Parliament in order that new legislation might be made to meet new requirements. Hitherto the conduct of affairs had been left to the aristocracy, who had governed, on the whole, excellently; but they were not able to deal with the more modern developments, and it became necessary to consult the wishes of the people at large, and to obtain their assistance in carrying on the Government. Thus many im-

provements were brought about by legislation, and these we shall now consider.

From an ACT OF PARLIAMENT OF 1799

Whereas great numbers of journeymen manufacturers and workmen in various parts of this Kingdom have by unlawful meetings and combinations endeavoured to obtain advance of their wages, and to effectuate other illegal purposes; whereby it is become necessary that more effectual provision should be made against such unlawful combinations; be it enacted . . . that every journeyman or workman, or other person who shall, at any time after the passing of this Act, enter into any combination to obtain an advance of wages, or to lessen or alter the hours or duration of the time of working, or to decrease the quantity of it, or who shall, by giving money, or by persuasion, intimidation, or any other means endeavour to prevent any unhired or unemployed journeyman or workman from hiring himself to any manufacturer or tradesman, or who shall persuade or influence any journeyman or workman to quit his work . . . shall be committed to and confined in the common gaol for any time not exceeding *three calendar months*. . . .

And for the more effectual suppression of all combinations amongst journeymen, workmen, and other persons employed in any manufacture, trade, or business, be it further enacted, that all persons who shall attend any meeting held for the purpose of . . . supporting or carrying on any combination for any purpose by this Act declared to be illegal . . . shall be confined in the common gaol for any time not exceeding three calendar months.

From the DUKE OF BUCKINGHAM'S MEMOIRS

On the 28th April 1834 there was a strike of the London journeymen tailors, numbering thirteen thousand. Their masters came to a determination not to

employ men belonging to trades unions, and after a few weeks, the journeymen were content to return to their work on those terms.

These trade unions and their strikes were becoming an insufferable nuisance; nevertheless, no proper effort was made to put them down. The mischief they created was well known to the Government, their interference with trade, their atrocious oaths, impious ceremonies, desperate tyranny, and secret assassinations, had been brought under their observation; but Ministers could not be stirred to any exhibition of energy for the protection either of the manufacturer, the workman, or the public.

Even the following powerful appeal was addressed to them without effect:

"Those whose lives and property have been endangered by these illegal associations have a right to call on Government to employ some additional means for their suppression. Those who wish for the prosperity of our trade, and what is of far more importance, the prosperity and happiness of the working-classes, should equally desire their extinction. Those who hate oppression should give their suffrages for the putting down these most capricious and irresponsible of all despotisms. They are alike hurtful to the workmen who form them, to the capitalists who are the objects of their hostility, and to the public who more remotely feel their effects. Were we asked to give a definition of a trade union, we should say that it is a society whose constitution is the worst of democracies, whose power is based on outrage, whose practice is tyranny, and whose end is self-destruction."

1. *Account for the point of view expressed by the writer of the last passage.*

2. *Why was the Act of 1799 passed, and why was it repealed later?*

CHAPTER VI

REFORM

It is pleasant to turn from the rather gloomy account, which has been contained in the last few chapters, of the condition of the English people during the first part of last century, and to consider the measures which were adopted towards improvement.

We may perhaps wonder why this improvement was delayed, why steps were not taken, as soon as the distress manifested itself, to remove the causes of the trouble. But we must remember that there were always some who profited by the very same circumstances which led to such great misery to others; the distress of the country population in the days of the Tudors was accompanied by increased wealth for the proprietors of sheep-farms and for the extravagant nobility; in the same way the poverty of the workers, both in town and country, during the early course of the Industrial Revolution, was no less remarkable than the great fortunes which were made by very many of the employers. If the price of food was high, so much the better for the owners of the land on which the food was produced; if hours were long and wages were low, so much the better for those who paid

the wages. So long as those who owned the land and those who paid the wages had complete control of the Government, it was not likely that much improvement could be made, if they were guided by no other principles than their own selfish advantage.

Now during all this period of suffering and poverty the workers of the country had no voice whatever in the direction of affairs; they had no votes, so could not elect representatives to Parliament to give utterance to their grievances. We have noticed that a writer of Queen Elizabeth's time referred to the common people as "of no account, but only to be ruled", and this was exactly the state of things until a number of Acts of Parliament, passed within the last half-century, placed the destinies of the nation in the hands of the people. Moreover, workpeople were, at first, not even allowed the right to combine for the purpose of improving their position by whatever means they could.

But at last the evils of the factory system began to make an impression upon the minds of certain philanthropic men, who commenced an agitation for passing laws to do away with the more glaring and abominable practices which were possible under existing laws. They were able, by degrees, to convince the majority of the members of Parliament that long hours, especially in the case of children, and the absence of supervision over the sanitary conditions of the factories and over the treatment of those employed in them, were not only contrary to common humanity, but were utterly harmful to the physical and moral

welfare of the nation. Overcrowding, bad food and clothing, wretched ventilation, overwork, long hours, all these things were seen to be not only a disgrace to a civilised community, but a positive danger. In 1802 the hours of work of "apprentices" were reduced to twelve per day. No age limit was fixed, and children living with their parents were just as badly treated as before. In 1819 an age limit of nine was appointed for all children working in cotton mills. In 1831 night work was forbidden for persons under twenty-one, and nobody under eighteen was to work longer than twelve hours a day. In 1833 further restrictions were made, and the scope of the Act was extended to woollen and other factories. In 1847 the working-day for women and children was fixed at ten hours. Arrangements were also made for the appointment of inspectors, and for the education of children employed in factories.

Other beneficial provisions have since been made, but the above outline will suffice to show how, in regard to the textile industries alone, the feeling steadily grew that the State must interfere to protect the people from the disastrous possibilities of an industrial system such as ours. All these Acts, which were generally supported by the landowners, were opposed by the millowners, who maintained that their industries would be ruined if these restrictions were made, and asserted that the welfare of the workers was quite safe in the hands of the employers.

The material prosperity of workpeople does not depend entirely upon tolerable conditions of labour,

nor upon the rate of wages; unless the cost of the necessaries of life is in a proper proportion to the wages received, poverty is inevitable. So long, therefore, as the price of food, for instance, is high while the wages earned are low, distress is sure to follow. Now corn, an important article of food, was the chief source of the farmers' livelihood and the landowners' profits. It was to the interest of both that its price should be as high as possible. The amount produced in the country varied very considerably, but the farmers and landowners always expected the same returns. Consequently, in years of bad harvests, bread would be scarce and expensive, unless an ample supply of corn was forthcoming from abroad. But the farmers did not at all approve of the importation of foreign corn, for it was almost always cheaper than that produced in England. To protect the English farmers various Corn Laws had been passed through the influence of the landowners, placing a tax upon imported corn. The effect, of course, was that the price of bread was very unsteady and often high. The only remedy was to abolish the Corn Laws and admit foreign corn free, so that the supply could be drawn from places where there might be abundance when there was a scarcity in England. The tables were now turned on the landed proprietors who had passed Factory Acts in opposition to the wishes of the manufacturers; for the latter were cordially in favour of cheap and abundant food for their workpeople; and by their efforts the Corn Laws were repealed in 1846, and another great grievance of the working classes removed.

From a SPEECH BY THE EARL OF SHAFTESBURY (1842)

I shall now proceed to the statement I have undertaken respecting the condition of the working classes in our mines and collieries, and the measures requisite to ameliorate that condition. I am sorry to detain the House by reading documents; I shall often have occasion to trespass on their patience; but the subject demands it. I think that the points I wish to establish should be made out by statements and documents, rather than by any attempts at declamation. In the first place, I shall present the House with the result of the evidence respecting the age and sex of persons employed in the mines and collieries The extent to which the employment of females prevails varies very much in different districts—in some parts of the country only males are employed, in other places a great number of females. With respect to the age at which children are worked in mines and collieries in South Staffordshire, it is common to begin at 7 years old; in Shropshire some begin as early as 6 years of age. In the West Riding of Yorkshire it is not uncommon for infants even of 5 years old to be sent to the pit. About Halifax and the neighbourhood children are sometimes brought to the pit at the age of 6, and are taken out of their beds at 4 o'clock. Near Oldham children are worked as low "as 4 years old, and in the small collieries near the hills some are so young they are brought to work in their bed-gowns." . . . In South Wales more cases are recorded of the employment of children in the pits at very early ages than in any other districts. It is not unusual to take them at 4 years. Many are absolutely carried to work. In the south of Ireland no children at all are employed. All the underground work, which in the coal-mines of England, Scotland, and Wales is done by young children, appears in Ireland to be done by young persons between the ages of 13 and 18. . . .

"While efficient ventilation," the Report adds, "is neglected, less attention is paid to drainage. . . . Some pits are dry and comfortable. . . . Many are so wet that the people have to work all day over their shoes

in water, at the same time that the water is constantly dripping from the roof; in other pits, instead of dripping, it constantly rains, as they term it, so that in a short time after they commence the labour of the day their clothes are drenched; and in this state, their feet also in water, they work all day. The children especially (and in general the younger the age the more painfully this unfavourable state of the work is felt) complain bitterly of this."

It must be borne in mind that it is in this district (Derbyshire) that the regular hours of a full day's labour are 14; and occasionally 16; and the children have to walk a mile or two at night without changing their clothes. In the West Riding of Yorkshire it appears that there are very few collieries with thin seams where the main roadways exceed a yard in height, and in some they do not exceed 26 or 28 inches; nay, in some the height is as little even as 22 inches; so that in such places the youngest child cannot work without the most constrained posture. The ventilation, besides, in general is very bad, and the drainage worse. In Oldham the mountain-seams are wrought in a very rude manner. There is very insufficient drainage. The ways are so low that only little boys can work in them, which they do naked, and often in mud and water, dragging sledge-tubs by the girdle and chain. In North Lancashire, "the drainage is often extremely bad; a pit of not above 20 inches seam," says a witness, "had a foot of water in it, so that he could hardly keep his head out of water." . . . The evidence as given by the young people and the old colliers themselves, of their sufferings, is absolutely piteous. In North Wales, in many of the mines, the roads are low and narrow, the air foul, the places of work dusty, dark, and damp, and the ventilation most imperfect. In South Wales, in many pits, the ventilation is grossly neglected, and the Report complains of the quantity of carbonic acid gas, which produces the most injurious effects, though not actually bad enough to prevent people from working.

From a SPEECH BY SIR ROBERT PEEL (1846)

We stand on the confines of Western Europe, the chief connecting link between the old world and the new. The discoveries of science, the improvements of navigation, have brought us within ten days of St. Petersburg, and will soon bring us within ten days of New York. We have an extent of coast greater in proportion to our population and the area of our land than any other nation, securing to us maritime strength and superiority. Iron and coal, the sinews of manufacture, give us advantages over every rival in the great competition of industry. Our capital far exceeds that which they can command. In ingenuity—in skill—in energy—we are inferior to none. Our national character, the free institutions under which we live, the liberty of thought and action, an unshackled press, spreading the knowledge of every discovery and of every advance in science—combine with our natural and physical advantages to place us at the head of those nations which profit by the free interchange of their products. And is this the country to shrink from competition? Is this the country to adopt a retrograde policy? Is this the country which can only flourish in the sickly artificial atmosphere of prohibition? Is this the country to stand shivering on the brink of exposure to the healthful breezes of competition?

This night you will have to decide what are the principles by which your commercial policy is to be regulated. Most earnestly, from a deep conviction, founded not upon the limited experience of three years alone, but upon the experience of the results of every relaxation of restriction and prohibition, I counsel you to set the example of liberality to other countries. Act thus, and it will be in perfect consistency with the course you have hitherto taken. Act thus, and you will provide an additional guarantee for the continued contentment, and happiness, and well-being of the great body of the people. Act thus, and you will have done whatever human sagacity can do for the promotion of commercial prosperity.

You may fail. Your precautions may be unavailing. They may give no certain assurance that mercantile and manufacturing prosperity will continue without interruption. It seems to be incident to great prosperity that there shall be a reverse—that the time of depression shall follow the season of excitement and success. That time of depression must perhaps return; and its return may be coincident with scarcity caused by unfavourable seasons. Gloomy winters, like those of 1841 and 1842, may again set in. Are those winters effaced from your memory? From mine they can never be. . . .

When you are again exhorting a suffering people to fortitude under their privations, when you are telling them, "These are the chastenings of an all-wise and merciful Providence, sent for some inscrutable but just and beneficent purpose—it may be, to humble our pride, or to punish our unfaithfulness, or to impress us with the sense of our own nothingness and dependence on His mercy"; when you are thus addressing your suffering fellow subjects, and encouraging them to bear without repining the dispensations of Providence, may God grant that by your decision of this night, you may have laid in store for yourselves the consolation of reflecting that such calamities are, in truth, the dispensations of Providence—that they have not been caused, they have not been aggravated by laws of man restricting, in the hour of scarcity, the supply of food!

From HANSARD'S PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES (1847)

Mr. John Bright said (in opposing the Ten Hours' Bill) . . . that wherever he was best known, and that was the nearer he went towards home, no one would accuse him of a want of sympathy with the working classes; but this he would tell the House, that if they went on, at the bidding of the working classes, to legislate against the capitalists, they would find a very different feeling engendered among the latter towards the operatives from that which they now exhibited. Now, to show that the capitalists were not unmindful of those whom they employed, he might state that some of

his own workmen had petitioned for this Bill; and he was glad of it, for it showed their independence, and that they dared to exercise a will of their own. . . . In the factory with which he himself was connected, in that town they had a large infant school, together with a reading-room and news-room, and a school for adults where the workmen attended after working hours. . . . Not a few hundred pounds per annum were expended in promoting the interests of the workmen; . . . but he would warn the House that if they now armed the workmen against the capitalists by fixing by law ten hours or any other number for the duration of labour, he believed it would be impossible that the feeling which hitherto existed in the past of the manufacturers towards the operatives would continue. . . . Believing that this proposition was contrary to all principles of sound legislation, that it was a delusion practised upon the working classes, that it was advocated by those who had no knowledge of manufactures, believing that it was one of the worst measures ever passed in the shape of an Act of the Legislature—believing this he felt compelled to give the motion for the second reading of the Bill his most strenuous opposition.

Lord John Russell said . . . The fear of foreign competition . . . has been repeatedly urged as a reason for our not interfering with the hours of labour. It was urged in 1833 and in 1836; but notwithstanding that these fears had not been attended to or acted on, I find that the cotton manufactures of this country have increased, and, I am happy to say, have flourished, while these young persons have at the same time benefited by our interference.

1. *Explain why John Bright, the "people's friend," uttered the speech quoted above.*

2. *How would Peel's speech be received by the manufacturers, the landowners, and the artisans of the country?*

CHAPTER VII

MODERN AGRICULTURE

THE agricultural revolution of the eighteenth century, which accompanied the great industrial revolution, has already been mentioned, but it will be as well to recall briefly the circumstances under which this change took place, in order that we may understand better the condition of this important industry during more recent years. It will be remembered that the old-fashioned methods of the yeomen farmers, while serving well enough for the maintenance of a limited number of people in a rough and ready way, were wasteful and costly, and enterprising landlords sought means to increase the productiveness of their land. Great interest was taken in farming during the eighteenth century, new crops were tried, new rotations were employed, turnips and artificial grasses were used to a much greater extent. By these means considerable saving was effected, but it was impossible to derive all the benefit so long as the open field system remained; consequently enclosure was pushed on by those landlords who realised the importance of the new farming.

The enclosures were economically beneficial, but were not effected without some serious injury to

some of the yeomen, and still more to the labourers. Their rights of grazing on the common waste usually disappeared, sometimes without compensation, and very little consideration was shown for them. Then we have seen how their wages were reduced and their independence and self-respect were undermined by the system of parish relief in aid of wages, and the invention of spinning and weaving machinery deprived them of part of their additional means of livelihood. Moreover, the necessity for capital, for working the large farms which had become common, caused the labourers to lose entirely any prospect of improving their condition and rising in the world; we have noticed that precisely the same thing happened to the artisans.

Until the end of the eighteenth century England could easily produce all the corn which our people required, and usually there was some left for export; but as the population increased with the growth of manufactures, the demand for food also increased, and it was soon found that the home supply was not always sufficient to meet the full requirements. The price of corn now depended upon the demands of the English consumers, and we have already examined the effect, upon the people as a whole, of the deliberate efforts to keep up the price of corn for the benefit of the agricultural interest. It would seem that with this protection the farmers and all the workers on the land ought to have been in a very flourishing condition; but this was by no means the case. The landowners obtained higher rents, it is true, but the rural population was

afflicted with the same depression and distress from which the townspeople suffered for many years after the close of the great war. The Corn Laws, imposing taxes on imported corn so as to keep up its price to a high level, quite failed in their objects, to make England a self-sufficing country and to keep the agricultural interest from ruin.

When these Corn Laws were repealed it seemed to the farmers that their position was now utterly hopeless, for they were exposed to the full force of foreign competition; and it had long been quite clear that corn could be brought to England from many foreign countries and sold more cheaply, even allowing for the cost of transport, than most English farmers could produce it. But the case was not so desperate as it appeared; all the ingenuity and enterprise of the farmers were called into requisition; they were stimulated to new activity, to a greater use of the resources of science and machinery. More capital was invested in permanent improvements; the necessity for thorough drainage was recognised; attention was given to the use of artificial manures; new machinery was invented, some of it worked by steam power, and the cost of labour was considerably lessened. By these means agriculture once more became a flourishing industry; the eighteenth century had been a period of growth and improvement, but it was far outstripped by the excellence which was attained some forty years ago, when it may be said that English farmers were the foremost agriculturists of the world.

The high-water mark, so to speak, of this excel-

lence and prosperity may be placed about the year 1874; and since then the condition and prospects of English agriculture have suffered a rather serious depression. This unsatisfactory state of things is due largely to the fact that many articles of farm produce, such as corn and cattle, can now be obtained from foreign countries at such cheap rates that the average English farmer finds very great difficulty in meeting the competition; the greatly increased facilities for communication with fertile regions in distant lands seem to render the efforts of home producers almost hopeless. The land, in fact, will not yield the return which it formerly did; and landowners, as a rule, have to be content with smaller rents. Many remedies are continually tried or suggested, with the object of restoring to the agricultural industry some measure of its former importance; some think that smaller farms could be better managed and would be more successful than the large farms which are at present customary; and of late years there has been a considerable increase in the number of small holdings.

The condition of agricultural labourers has, on the whole, steadily improved during the last half-century. For some time very many of them suffered exactly in the same way as factory workers from the oppression of their employers; it was more difficult for them to form combinations or trade unions than it was for workers who lived in towns, and could communicate with each other much more easily. But in 1872 a National Agricultural Labourers' Union was formed, and the material conditions of the workers in the field have consider-

ably improved, although their wages are even now in a large number of cases deplorably low.

From G. R. PORTER'S "PROGRESS OF THE NATION" (1836)

During the last half-century a great revolution has taken place in the management of land, and by proper attention to the rotation of crops, and by the application of capital, the soil has been brought to a state which enables the farmer to draw from it a better return. If reference is made to the evidence given before the Committee of the House of Commons, to which the numerous petitions complaining of agricultural distress were referred in 1821, it will be seen that at that time almost the only grain produced in the fens of Cambridgeshire was oats. Since then, by draining and manuring, the capability of the soil has been so changed that these fens now produce some of the finest wheat grown in England; and this more costly grain now constitutes the main dependence of the farmers in a district where, fourteen years ago, its production was scarcely attempted. It was pretty generally understood at the time that the appointment of the Committee of 1833 was a concession made to those members of the House of Commons who fancied themselves interested in the continuance of the present system of corn laws, and accordingly the whole tendency of the evidence given appears to be to make out the existence of distress among agriculturists, the amount of which would be aggravated by any alteration of the law. Under these circumstances, every kind of testimony which would bring to light a state of things adverse to the continuance of protection against foreign importation, was, if not purposely kept back, certainly allowed to appear with reluctance; and yet a body of evidence which proves, from facts which cannot be controverted, that all is not barrenness and desolation in our fields, is to be found in almost every page of that Report.

Everywhere the condition of agricultural labourers

is stated to be visibly amended; nor has the situation of the landowner been less materially improved, so far at least as his condition depends upon the rent which he receives from his land. With scarcely an exception, the revenue drawn in the form of rent, from the ownership of the soil, has been at least doubled in every part of Great Britain since 1790. This is not a random assertion, but, as regards many counties in England, can be proved by the testimony of living witnesses. In the county of Essex, farms could be pointed out which were let just before the war of the French Revolution at less than 10s. per acre, and which rose rapidly during the progress of that contest, until, in 1812, the rent paid for them was from 45s. to 50s. per acre. In Berkshire and Wiltshire there are farms which in 1790 were let at 14s. per acre, and which in 1810 produced to the landlord a rent of 70s., being a fivefold advance. These farms were let in 1820 at 50s., and at this time pay 30s. In Staffordshire there are several farms on one estate which were let in 1790 at 8s. per acre, and which having advanced at the dearest time to 35s., have since been lowered to 20s., an advance, after all, of 150 per cent. within the half century. . . . During the same period the prices of most of the articles which constitute the landlord's expenditure have fallen materially; and if his condition be not improved in a corresponding degree, that circumstance must arise from improvidence or miscalculation, or habits of expensive living beyond what would be warranted by the doubling of income which he has experienced and is still enjoying.

From the "LIFE OF JOSEPH ARCH" (1898)

I had spent years thinking the matter well out; I had pondered over it when at work in the wood and the field; I had considered the question when I was hedging and ditching; I had thrashed it right out in my mind when I was tramping to and from my day's toil; and I had come to the conclusion that only organised labour could stand up, even for a single day, against employers' tyranny.

If I were a forward figure in this business, and things went all wrong, it might be the ruin of me. I remembered the Labourers' Union in Dorsetshire, started in the thirties—what had become of that? Poor Hammett had had to pay a heavy price for standing up with his fellow-labourers against oppression. He and five others had been tried in 1834, and sentenced to seven years' transportation. The law had said that, when forming their little Agricultural Labourers' Union, they had administered illegal oaths. The plain truth of it was that, for daring to be Unionists they had been sent to the hulks in Australia. What matter though such a storm of anger had been raised by the shameful punishment that a free pardon had been granted them after about two years. They had been terribly punished. The disgrace and the indignities they had been obliged to put up with could never be wiped out. They were martyrs in a good cause, and I honoured them; but I did not want to be a martyr, I wanted to win alive and kicking. The law could not send me to the hulks; but there are more ways of torturing and ruining a man than one, and I knew that if the law could catch me anyhow it would.

What if the Union we meant to start in this corner of Warwickshire to-night should fall to bits like a badly-made box? There was no saying what might happen. The men might be in earnest, but could they stay? Could they stand it out? Had they grit enough in them to face the farmers as free-born Englishmen demanding their just dues, when they had been cringing to them so long? And what was a handful of poverty-stricken, half-starved, agricultural labourers going to do against so many of these powerful employers and rich oppressors? No Union I was sure could do any real good, or make any lasting improvement in the men's condition, if it was to be confined to a few men in one county. It would have to be a thumping big Union, with hundreds in it heartening one another for the glorious struggle before them. It would have to be a Union whose members were drawn from every county

in England, and bound into one great unit by a common desire and a common hope.

I mounted an old pig-stool, and in the flickering light of the lanterns I saw the earnest upturned faces of these poor brothers of mine—faces gaunt with hunger and pinched with want—all looking towards me and ready to listen to the words that would fall from my lips. These white slaves of England stood there with the darkness all about them, like the Children of Israel waiting for some one to lead them out of the land of Egypt. I determined that, if they made a mistake and took the wrong turning, it would not be my fault, so I stood on my pig-stool and spoke out straight and strong for Union. My speech lasted about an hour, I believe, but I was not measuring minutes then. By the end of it the men were properly roused, and they pressed in and crowded up, asking questions; they regularly pelted me with them; it was a perfect hail-storm. We passed a resolution to form a Union then and there, and the names of the men could not be taken down fast enough; we enrolled between two and three hundred members that night. It was a brave start, and before we parted it was arranged that there should be another meeting at the same place in a fortnight's time. I knew now that a fire had been kindled which would catch on, and spread, and run abroad like sparks in stubble; and I felt certain that this night we had set light to a beacon, which would prove a rallying point for the agricultural labourers throughout the country.

(*From the Preface by the Countess of Warwick*)

I look upon the National Agricultural Labourers' Union as one of the most remarkable movements of modern times. The phrase is commonplace, but it is true; the Union was remarkable alike in its inception, progress, and achievement; and in the social history of England it must henceforth fill a prominent place. I know of no movement, working always within the four corners of the law, which accomplished so much

in so short a time. . . . The Union is known by its fruits. We have only to compare the condition of the agricultural labourer before the Union was started, with his condition to-day, to see that these fruits are manifold. The late Dr. Fraser, the well-known Bishop of Manchester, then vicar of a country parish, bore eloquent witness before a Royal Commission in the sixties as to the deplorable state of things existing at that time in many rural districts. Bread was dear, and wages down to starvation point; the labourers were uneducated, underfed, underpaid; their cottages were often unfit for human habitation, the sleeping and sanitary arrangements were appalling. In many a country village the condition of the labourer and his family was but little removed from that of the cattle they tended.

If we ask how these things came about and were suffered to continue, we are sorrowfully constrained to admit that the agricultural labourer in those days had few friends, either in his own class or in any other. His lot was indeed a hard one, and the ameliorations were comparatively few; and even they came not as a right, but rather as a charity, and so helped to weaken that spirit of independence which is an Englishman's birthright. Agricultural depression (a very real obstacle now) could hardly then be urged as an excuse; for at the time when wheat was dearest and land most valuable the lot of the agricultural labourer was at its worst.

1. *Comment upon the most interesting features of the passage from the "Progress of the Nation."*

2. *Explain exactly why the Agricultural Labourers Union was so much later in its formation than most of the others.*

3. *Summarise the conditions which seem to you to be necessary for a revival in the prosperity of English agriculture.*

CHAPTER VIII

MODERN COMMERCE

THE chief features which mark the growth of English commerce have already been considered, and it remains now to sketch the result of this development in more recent times. The basis of commerce is exchange of products or manufactures, on terms which are profitable to all parties concerned. Each country has some particular advantage in climate or soil, rendering the production of some special article or articles more remunerative than is the case in other countries; and this accounts for the nature of our foreign trade in early or mediæval times when our chief exports were the natural productions of the country, wool, corn, tin, and so forth. Naturally, in these early days, there was little competition between nations, although there might be any amount of rivalry between individual traders. But when manufactures began to develop, economic jealousy arose between nations, more particularly when machinery was introduced; at first the essentials for successful manufacture were a satisfactory supply of raw material and special skill in industry; and England's manufactures flourished greatly when the skill of her artisans was stimulated by the immigration of foreign

workmen. When, however, machinery began to be used, the individual skill of the workman was of less importance; it does not take so long to learn the management of a machine as it does to acquire the art of manufacture by hand, and under ordinary conditions it is possible for the inhabitants of any country in the world to become manufacturers of the more common necessaries of life.

But even with this levelling of advantages due to machinery there still remain special conditions which give one country a more favourable position than another. The cotton of India, the wool of Australia, are not manufactured into cloth on the spot where they are produced; it is more economical, on the whole, to bring these raw materials to the machinery and the coal fields of England than to take the necessary coal and machinery to the place of production. It is on this solid advantage, the possession of coal and iron fields, that the manufacturing and commercial supremacy of England has been based; and that supremacy can last only so long as other countries are less fortunate in this particular respect, or so long as our industrial organisation and the intelligence and efficiency of our workpeople are superior. The great drain on our natural resources of coal, and the opening up of coal fields in other countries, seem to show that we cannot depend much longer on this natural advantage for the maintenance of our important position; and our organisation of industry and the excellence of our artisans must be regarded as the first and most important considerations for the future.

The most important development of English commerce during the nineteenth century was the adoption of the policy known as Free Trade, and we must briefly examine the causes which led to its establishment. The practice which formerly prevailed was to encourage, or protect, home industries, either by excluding altogether certain articles of foreign production or manufacture, or by imposing taxes upon them when imported. When these imports were chiefly or entirely articles of luxury it was thought to be a good policy to stimulate home manufacture and provide employment for English work-people, the advantage of free import would not be felt by those who did not purchase the goods, while they would derive benefit from the employment opened up by the discouragement of the import of articles which they could produce.

While England was self-sufficing, so long as all the necessaries of life could be produced within her own borders, this protective policy was perhaps useful and wise; and most foreign countries, as well as some of our own colonies, continue to follow the same plan. But as it became plain, during the course of the nineteenth century, that England was becoming more and more dependent on foreign sources for the necessaries of life, a strong feeling was aroused in favour of the reversal of the principle of protection. It was urged that since more and more people in the country were becoming consumers of foreign goods, they were rendered poorer by being compelled to pay the higher prices which resulted from the protective taxes. The most flagrant instance was corn, and we have observed

the injury which was done to the poorer classes of the country by the maintenance of high prices in this commodity.

At length it was decided that the old protective system was no longer the best policy for the general interests of the country. A start was made in 1823 by Mr. Huskisson, who removed some of the duties on wool and silk; the necessity for the abolition of duties on imported corn was acknowledged in 1846, and this great reform was carried out by Sir Robert Peel. It was left for Mr. Gladstone to continue the work; the first principle was that customs duties should be levied only for purposes of revenue, and not for the protection of home industries; and the ultimate object was complete free trade. It was thought by the promoters that other countries would perceive the advantages of the new policy, and would adopt it; but in this respect their hopes have not been fulfilled, for the conditions in other countries differ from those in England, and many matters, which do not affect us at all, have to be taken into consideration. So that it is useless to say that any particular trade policy is the best all round; it depends entirely upon special circumstances.

During Mr. Gladstone's administration very extensive changes were effected; reductions were made in duties on articles of food such as butter, eggs and cheese; before 1842 over a thousand articles were taxed on importation; in 1853 the number was reduced to less than five hundred, and by 1860 there were less than fifty. This policy has, on the whole, been decidedly successful; and whatever

may be the merits of reverting, as many people desire, to some form of protection for certain industries, it is generally believed that the broad principles of free trade policy could not be reversed without widespread suffering.

From the PETITION OF THE LONDON MERCHANTS (1820)

To the Honourable the House of Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland.

The humble Petition of the undersigned Merchants of the City of London,

Sheweth: That foreign commerce is eminently conducive to the wealth and prosperity of a country, by enabling it to import the commodities for the production of which the soil, climate, capital and industry of other countries are best calculated, and to export in payment those articles for which its own situation is better adapted.

That freedom from restraint is calculated to give the utmost extension to foreign trade, and the best direction to the capital and industry of the country.

That the maxim of buying in the cheapest market and selling in the dearest, which regulates every merchant in his individual dealings, is strictly applicable as the best rule for the trade of the whole nation.

That a policy founded on those principles would render the commerce of the world an interchange of mutual advantages, and diffuse an increase of wealth and enjoyments among the inhabitants of each state.

That, unfortunately, a policy the very reverse of this has been, and is, more or less, adopted and acted upon by the Government of this and of every other country, each trying to exclude the productions of other countries with the specious and well-meant design of encouraging its own productions; thus inflicting upon the bulk of its subjects, who are consumers, the necessity of submitting to privations in the quantity or quality of

commodities; and thus rendering what ought to be the source of mutual benefit and of harmony among states, a constantly-recurring occasion of jealousy and hostility.

That among the other evils of the destructive or protective system, not the least is, that the artificial protection of one branch of industry or source of production against foreign competition, is set up as a ground of claim by other branches for similar protection; so that if the reasoning upon which restrictive or prohibitory regulations are founded were followed out consistently, it would not stop short of excluding us from all foreign commerce whatsoever. And the same train of argument which, with corresponding prohibitions and protective duties, should exclude us from foreign trade, might be brought forward to justify the re-enactment of restrictions upon the interchange of productions (unconnected with public revenue) among the kingdoms composing the Union, or among the counties of the same kingdom.

That nothing would more tend to counteract the commercial hostility of foreign states than the adoption of a more enlightened and more conciliatory policy on the part of this country.

Your Petitioners therefore humbly pray that your honourable House will be pleased to take the subject into consideration, and to adopt such measures as may be calculated to give greater freedom to foreign commerce, and thereby to increase the resources of the State.

From J. S. MILL'S "PRINCIPLES OF POLITICAL ECONOMY"

The economical advantages of commerce are surpassed in importance by those of its effects which are intellectual and moral. It is hardly possible to overrate the value, in the present low state of human improvement, of placing human beings in contact with persons dissimilar to themselves, and with modes of thought and action unlike those with which they

are familiar. Commerce is now what war once was, the principal source of this contact. Commercial adventurers from more advanced countries have generally been the first civilisers of barbarians. And commerce is the purpose of the far greater part of the communication which takes place between civilised nations. Such communication has always been, and is peculiarly in the present age, one of the primary sources of progress. To human beings, who, as hitherto educated, can scarcely cultivate even a good quality without running it into a fault, it is indispensable to be perpetually comparing their own notions and customs with the experience and example of persons in different circumstances from themselves; and there is no nation which does not need to borrow from others, not merely particular arts and practices but essential points of character in which its own type is inferior. Finally, commerce first taught nations to see with good-will the wealth and prosperity of one another. Before the patriot, unless sufficiently advanced in culture to feel the world his country, wished all countries weak, poor, and ill-governed, but his own; he now sees in their wealth and progress a direct source of wealth and progress to his own country. It is commerce which is rapidly rendering war obsolete, by strengthening and multiplying the personal interests which are in natural opposition to it. And, it may be said without exaggeration that the great extent and rapid increase of international trade, in being the principal guarantee for the peace of the world, is the great permanent security for the uninterrupted progress of the ideas, the institutions, and the character of the human race.

1. *Carefully explain why certain nations restricted imports by the imposition of taxes.*

2. *What were the most important objections brought against this system by the London merchants in 1820?*

3. *Give a careful statement of the advantages which the country experiences as a result of commercial intercourse.*

CHAPTER IX

THE MODERN CAPITALIST SYSTEM OF INDUSTRY

IN the light of what we have by this time learnt concerning the occupations and social conditions of English people throughout the course of our history, we may now attempt a general understanding in a simple way of the modern system under which our industry is carried on, and which rules our national life.

One of the most marked features about industrial development has been the increase in the power of capital as a controlling force. We may define capital, roughly, as accumulated wealth which is used for the maintenance and development of industry. In early times the labourer was altogether independent of "capitalists"; men who had wealth did not employ it directly so as to produce more wealth for themselves. The craftsmen of Norman times looked after all the affairs connected with their craft, from the purchase of their material to the sale of the finished article; and naturally they often spent a good part of their time in doing things which were not really part of their actual craft at all, in seeking customers, for instance. It was certainly a distinct disadvantage to industry that the workman could not spend all his time in

doing his proper work; and it became clear that the intervention of a "middleman," who could be responsible for all the operations outside the actual manufacture, would be an economic advantage. The craftsmen were thus able to concentrate all their attention on the work for which they were specially fitted.

This was the introduction of the principle of division of labour, which possesses many obvious advantages in manufacture. If a workman spends all his time in one particular operation he ultimately becomes exceedingly expert, and production is thereby increased, an advantage which, of course, very often entails great monotony and drudgery in the work. In agriculture, by the way, this division of labour is not so practicable; it is impossible to concentrate so as to acquire special skill in reaping or mowing, with the idea of doing nothing else; agricultural operations depend on the seasons, and cannot be hastened by any artificial expedient such as division of labour.

From intervening to buy and sell and arrange trade generally, the next step for the middlemen was to provide tools and implements for the workpeople. This arrangement seemed to answer very well, and its advantages were plain; the workers were relieved of most of the responsibility; all they had to do was to perform certain work for which they received certain wages, according to the amount of work done; and the work, as we have just noticed, was more valuable if it was of a special or particular sort. Now it is easy to see that although this system has many good points, it has serious drawbacks;

the workmen become entirely dependent on their employers for the chance of employment, for the means of doing the work, and for the materials; without the capitalist they are helpless.

Again, in the old days of individual manufacture, prices were regulated first of all by the requirements of the workers; the whole idea was that work was done in order that the worker might live, and for no other reason; hence we find attempts to fix the prices of goods so that a reasonable reward should come to the craftsman; consequently prices and wages were fairly steady as a rule. But when the control of industry passed into the hands of people who did not do the actual manufacture themselves, but were only concerned to make profit out of the trade, we find a different condition of things altogether; the idea of the capitalist employer is to secure customers, and to produce cheaply with that object; moreover, the capitalist seeks to derive advantage from every little change in the market, and consequently prices vary considerably, and the position of the worker is rendered unstable; he is not so safe in his employment as formerly.

By the end of the eighteenth century labour had become almost entirely dependent on capitalists, and the two interests, although really the same, appear constantly to be opposed. Both interests benefit by good and steady trade and suffer by bad and fluctuating trade. But the capitalists at first considered that they were the best people to arrange conditions; they knew all about the prospects and state of industry, and they thought that they ought to be quite free to control every department of manufacture. It

was only when it became obvious that their policy was leading to the ruin of the artisan population that they were compelled to allow interference by the State. Since then, as we have previously shown, the relations between capital and labour have continually been interfered with by legislation.

An interesting tendency of capitalism is seen in the more recent attempts to obtain complete control over particular industries by the formation of trusts. Competition between producers naturally leads to reduction of prices, and the consumers, of course, benefit; but if the producers combine together they can derive larger profits for themselves. This practice of combination among capitalist producers is largely extending, and by the economy in administration and the more effective control over the market immense profits are frequently made.

This pursuit of profit, and the injury wrought by unscrupulous capitalists during the last hundred years, have produced a state of antagonism and enmity between capital and labour; the usual attitude of the workers is that the profit resulting from their work is unequally divided; that the wages paid for management and the interest on the capital invested are often unduly and wrongfully excessive; and plans are continually being devised for carrying on our industrial system more efficiently and more cheaply. Some think that capital might be more cheaply obtained by the State, and that the State should control all the industries of the country and manage them; others think that it is doubtful whether Government officials would direct the industries any better or

at any less cost than the present managers. Some again believe that each industry ought to be controlled by those who are engaged in it; but this view does not meet with general favour.

We cannot tell what the future will bring forth in the matter of the organisation of industry so that the general interests of the whole community may be best served, it is certain that greater and greater efficiency is always absolutely necessary for any real progress; and no tinkering with the present system will be of any avail unless it is accompanied by superior methods, more intelligence, and better and healthier conditions. In any case a careful study and proper understanding of our social history will assist in a better appreciation of the present order of things, and a more enlightened view of the prospects for the future.

From "SELF-SUPPORTING HOME COLONIES," BY ROBERT OWEN (1841)

The daily advance of scientific discoveries; the new passion for educating the masses; the extraordinary disinclination to war among the British and other warlike nations; the easy and rapid communication between the most distant countries; the general adoption by civilised countries of scientific power to supersede the necessity for severe or injurious manual service; and the friendly union of governments which until latterly have been in a great savage hostility to each other; all, with many strange and extraordinary occurring events, indicate with unerring certainty that a great change is coming over the nations of the earth, and that the wise, the good, the happy existence of man approaches with gigantic strides; in fact, that the millennium is not far distant.

And shall irrational man, in any of his present puerile

divisions of class, or sect, or party, or country, or colour, set himself to oppose this great, magnificent and glorious change for the benefit of the human race now and through the coming ages? Vain and useless will such attempts prove. The decree has gone forth from the almighty energies of the universe, that man shall be put in the right path now, to become good, and wise, and happy; and every obstacle in the way of his progress to this advent of his existence shall prove unavailing and powerless.

But to effect this great and glorious change, it must be made known to the world:

That the necessary character of the military profession is to generate a warlike spirit and a desire for war; to perpetuate feelings of hostility among individuals and nations, that must immortalise immorality, continue to foster all the bad passions, and create confusion and disorder throughout the world.

That the necessary character of the individual buying-and-selling system is to train the human race to acquire the inferior mind of a peddler and dealer whose business of life is to endeavour to procure everything from others at the lowest price, and to dispose of everything to others at the highest price, or in such a manner that he shall secure the greatest amount of money, profit, worldly honours, or individual considerations to himself. And in this sense, all, from the highest to the lowest, are now trained to become, by the individual competition system, mere peddlers, tradesmen, or dealers, who are constantly endeavouring to obtain the services and productions of others at the easiest rate, the lowest value, and to sell their own services at the highest, or to obtain all they can in exchange for them. The sovereigns, statesmen, legislators, professional men, military men, merchants, bankers, manufacturers, tradesmen, workmen, and beggars are now all, under the individual competitive system which has hitherto prevailed over the world, engaged in this low, unjust, degrading traffic. By these means the successful in this inferior and immoral course of conduct do not

obtain a tithe, no, nor a fiftieth part of the permanent, substantial, healthy, enlightened, superior advantages, pleasures, and enjoyments that, under the united system, all may attain and securely possess without obstruction, competition, or contest.

From MORLEY'S "LIFE OF RICHARD COBDEN"

We have to-day a complete, minute, and voluminous code for the protection of labour; buildings must be kept pure; dangerous machinery must be fenced; children and young persons must not clean it while in motion; their hours are not only limited but fixed; continuous employment must not exceed a given number of hours, varying with the trade, but prescribed by the law in given cases; a statutable number of holidays is imposed; the children must go to school, and the employer must have every week a certficate to that effect; if an accident happens, notice must be sent to the proper authorities; special provisions are made for bakehouses, for lace-making, for collieries, and for a whole schedule of other special callings; for the due enforcement and vigilant supervision of this immense host of minute prescriptions, there is an immense host of inspectors, certifying surgeons, and other authorities, whose business it is "to speed and post o'er land and ocean" in restless guardianship of every kind of labour, from that of the woman who plaits straw at her cottage door, to that of the miner who descends into the bowels of the earth, and the seaman who conveys the fruits and materials of universal industry to and fro between the remotest parts of the globe.

1. *What reasons had Robert Owen for his prophecies, and how far have they been fulfilled or falsified?*

2. *Criticise his statements with regard to the military profession and to the mercantile spirit.*

3. *Would you suggest that the protection of labour and interference by legislation should proceed much further than the last extract shows?*

CHAPTER X

SOCIAL PROGRESS IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

THE Industrial Revolution was the beginning of a period marked by innumerable inventions, mechanical and scientific, which have had a most remarkable effect on social life. To realise the difference which these inventions have made, we have only to imagine an England without railways, tramways, motors, the penny post, telegraph, telephone, steamboats, electric light and power, and numberless other contrivances which are now quite indispensable for our comfort and convenience. All these things came into existence during the nineteenth century, as well as very many improvements in machinery and engineering work generally. Now all these things, when first they were introduced, were welcomed as improvements; they were considered to be additions to the prosperity and progress of the community. Any device which saved labour or which rendered communication easier was generally accepted as a desirable thing; and so, in fact, it is, provided that it really fulfils its object and contributes to the general welfare.

The lives of the people are now much fuller, much more crowded, than they were a century ago; increased facility of communication and the

lowering of the prices of commodities generally have brought about a considerable raising of the standard of life, so that many things which a hundred years ago were luxuries almost unattainable by the ordinary person are now commonplace and regarded almost as necessaries even by the poor. The number of wants, in fact, has increased, and a great deal of time and energy is expended nowadays in satisfying these wants which have grown up and attached themselves to our modern civilisation, over and above the actual needs of life. This is one of the most striking features of our modern conditions, and it is useless to point to the astonishing extent or variety of scientific invention as though that were in itself an evidence of progress, unless it can be shown that all this wonderful advance in one particular direction has been accompanied by a real improvement in the welfare of the people.

If we are inclined to take a gloomy view of things, we point out the existence of a terrible amount of poverty and wretchedness, in town and country alike; we show that while trade expands, and imports and exports increase in quantity and value, there are large numbers of British people who can find no share of this prosperity coming to them, and many thousands cannot even find a chance of taking any regular and permanent part in the work of the country. This condition of unemployment is one of the most serious problems of the present day, and although it is too great a subject to discuss here, it may just be mentioned that it is an inevitable result of the capitalist system, and the control of

industry by people who alone are responsible for creating and supplying a variable and ever-changing market. There can be no certainty of regular and permanent employment for all the people of the country under the present conditions, and the only resource, in the opinion of many thoughtful persons, is to accept the fact and make some arrangements for lessening the evil results; and these arrangements must be made by the State.

This at once suggests what is, perhaps, the most prominent feature of modern English history—namely, the great and growing interest which is taken by the Government in matters concerning the social welfare of the people. The new industrial system and the new conditions which it brought about, the migration of workers to the towns where they had more opportunity for education and the discussion of their prospects, produced a desire among them to obtain a greater share in their own government. This, by degrees, has been obtained, and England has become a democracy, a nation governed by the people composing it. Consequently measures of social reform are continually being passed, and no political party can hope to obtain power unless its programme contains some proposals which are designed to further the interests of the workers of the country.

These democratic measures perhaps constitute the most valuable contributions towards real progress; the interference of the State between employer and workman, even between parent and child, is now a recognised and established fact. Despite the opposition of people who asserted that

any interference of this kind would destroy liberty and bring ruin to the nation, the State has continued to make laws with the object of promoting the general well-being. The first notable instances were the Factory Acts, and since then we have had measures providing for free education, giving powers to local bodies to provide better houses for artisans, limiting the hours of employment, and granting compensation to workers in case of injury; technical and higher education have been encouraged, and pensions have been granted to aged poor persons.

Besides these solid advantages of legislation, it can be truthfully said that the general tone of social life is considerably higher than it was a century ago; although the struggle for wealth and material gain infects every class of society, although modern life seems to be a feverish rush and turmoil compared with the quieter and more easy-going existence of a hundred years ago, although the higher forms of art and literature seem to be irremédiably injured by the modern material ideals, still we can say, on the whole, that we are improved, as a nation; we are more intelligent, better educated, more keenly alive to our opportunities, more humane, healthier than were our forefathers in the "good old days."

From SIDNEY AND BEATRICE WEBB'S "PROBLEMS OF MODERN INDUSTRY" (1902)

The advent of the trust almost necessarily implies an improvement in industrial organisation, measured, that is to say, by the diminution of the efforts and sacrifices involved in production. Just as it was a

gain to the community, from this point of view, for the myriad small masters to be merged in the relatively few capitalist employers, so it is a further gain to merge these capitalist employers into great trusts or corporations. So far as their organisations prevail, the production of commodities is carried on with less labour, less friction, less waste, than it was under the arrangements which they have superseded. There may be other disadvantages, just as there were other disadvantages when the hand-loom was superseded by the power-loom. But we must not let the drawbacks obscure the element of real progress. The rule of the great capitalist corporations secures the organisation of the work of the world in a way which enables it to be done with a smaller expenditure of labour.

But will the public be allowed to get the benefit of this industrial improvement? Is it not to be expected that the trusts will put up prices against the consumer, and so levy a tax upon the world compared with which the exactions of Government sink into insignificance? This danger seems exaggerated and comparatively unimportant. It must be remembered that anything like absolute monopoly of production in the staple needs of the mass of the people is unknown, and practically impossible. The main products of the world are produced in too many different countries, under too many different industrial systems, for any absolute combination into a single hand. A trust may, indeed, easily come to dominate a single market. But even then so great is the expansion of demand for the articles of common consumption that it will probably pay the trust better to reduce prices than to raise them.

It is when we come to the great mass of wage-earners that we see the really grave consequences of industrial autocracy. These men, with their wives and families, must necessarily constitute the great bulk of the population, the "common lump of men." It is in their lives that the civilisation of a nation consists, and it is by their condition that it will be judged. . . .

The policy of the national minimum translates itself

into four main branches of legislative and executive activity. There will have to be a national minimum of wages. The trusts, or the other employers, will be under no legal obligation to employ any person whatever. But if they do employ him or her, it will be a condition of every contract that its terms shall not be such as will impair the efficiency of the citizen or diminish the vitality of the race. Those whose labour is not worth the national minimum will be maintained by the community, as indeed they are now. But of all the ways of maintaining those unable to earn a full livelihood, by far the most costly and injurious is to allow them to compete in the labour market, and thus drag down by their very infirmity those who are whole. There are still people, of course, who cannot imagine how a legal minimum wage could be enforced, just as there were, sixty years ago, economists who demonstrated the impossibility of factory laws. . . .

There will be a national minimum of leisure and recreation secured by law to every citizen. It will be an implied condition of every contract of employment, rigidly enforced by law, that it shall leave untouched sixteen hours out of each twenty-four for needful sleep, recreation, exercise of mind or body, and the duties of citizenship and family life. . . .

There will be a national minimum of sanitation, enforced not merely on land or house owners or occupiers, but also on local governing authorities. The nation will find it preposterous that any city, merely out of stupidity or incapacity or parsimony, should foster disease, or bring up its citizens in a condition of impaired vitality. . . .

There will be a national minimum of education—not merely in the provision of schools, but in genuinely compulsory attendance at them. Besides schools and colleges of every grade, there will have to be an adequate "scholarship ladder," securing maintenance as well as free tuition, for every scholar proving himself or herself fitted for anything beyond common schooling. . . .

Only by the enforcement of some such national

minimum of subsistence, leisure, sanitation, and education, will modern industrial communities escape degeneration and decay. Where life is abandoned to unfettered competition, what is known as "Gresham's Law" applies—the bad drives out the good. To prevent this evil result is, as both Europe and America are discovering in the twentieth century, the main function of government.

1. *Criticise as carefully as you can the policy of the national minimum, considering each section separately.*

2. *What part of these proposals would be the most difficult to put into operation, and why?*

3. *Clearly state, with examples if you can, the advantages which the community can derive from the formation of large trading concerns, and suggest how any disadvantages could be avoided.*

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